

LECTURES  
ON  
WITCHCRAFT,  
COMPRISING A HISTORY  
OF  
THE DELUSION IN SALEM,  
IN  
1692.

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BOSTON,  
CARTER, HENDÉE AND BABCOCK.

M DCCC XXXI.

## P R E F A C E .

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THE following lectures were originally prepared for delivery in the Salem Lyceum. They have been repeated before similar associations in Marblehead, in Beverly, in South Danvers, in North Danvers, in Waltham, in Gloucester, in Haverhill, in Lynn and in Topsfield. A large part of what appears in this volume was necessarily omitted in the delivery. Several considerations, in co-operation with requests made from various quarters, both in public and in private, have induced the author to offer them to the community at large through the press.

The subject of which they treat is intimate-

ly connected with the history, not merely of New England, but of the imagination of man, as it has been developed in various regions and ages. Very inadequate and unjust views are entertained of the scene in our annals, which they illustrate, and of the persons who acted or suffered in that scene. The principal inducement, however, to give them a permanent circulation, is a conviction that the facts they relate, and the reflections they naturally suggest, are full of the most important instruction. No one, it is thought, can ponder upon them without receiving useful lessons to guide and influence him with reference to the cultivation and government of his own moral and intellectual faculties, and to the obligations that press upon him as a member of society to do what he may to enlighten, rectify and control public sentiment. In the hope that they may contribute, in combination with the great variety of other means now employed, to diffuse the blessings of knowledge, to check

the prevalence of fanaticism, to accelerate the decay of superstition, to prevent an unrestrained exercise of imagination and passion in the individual or in societies of men, and to establish the effectual dominion of true religion and sound philosophy, they are now presented to the public.

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## LECTURE I.

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It is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the human being, that he loves to contemplate the scenes of the past, and desires to have his own history borne down to the future — this, like all the other propensities of our nature, is accompanied by faculties to secure its gratification. The gift of speech by which the parent can convey information to the child, and the old transmit intelligence to the young, is an indication that it is the design of the Author of our being, that we should receive from those who are passing away before us, the narrative of their experience, and communicate the results of our own to the generations that are to succeed us. All nations have to a greater

or less degree been faithful to their trust, in using the gift to fulfil the design of the Giver. It is impossible to name a people who do not possess cherished traditions that have descended from their early ancestors.

Although it is generally considered that the invention of a system of arbitrary and external signs to communicate thought, is one of the greatest and most arduous achievements of human ingenuity, yet so universal is the disposition to make future generations acquainted with our condition and history, a disposition, the efficient cause of which can only be found in a sense of the value of such knowledge, that you can scarcely find a people on the face of the globe, who have not contrived by some means or other, from the rude monument of shapeless rock, to the most perfect alphabetical language, to communicate with posterity, thus declaring as with the voice of nature herself, that it is desirable and proper that all men should know as much as possible, of the character, and actions, and fortunes of their predecessors on the stage of life.

It is not difficult to discern the end, for which this disposition to preserve for the future and contemplate the past was imparted to us. If all that we knew were what is taught by our individual experience, our minds would have but little, comparatively, to exercise and expand them, and our characters would be the result of the limited influences embraced within the narrow sphere of our particular relations and circumstances. But now, that our eye is attracted to the observation of those who have lived before us, our materials for reflection and sources of instruction are multiplied. The virtues we admire in our ancestors, not only adorn and dignify their names, but win us to their imitation. Their prosperity and happiness spread abroad a diffusive light that reaches us, and brightens our condition. The wisdom that guided their footsteps becomes at the same time a lamp to our path. The observation of the errors of their course, and of the consequent disappointments and sufferings that befel them, enables us to pass in safety through rocks and ledges, on which

they were shipwrecked;—and while we grieve to see them eating the bitter fruits of their own vices and crimes, we can seize the benefits of their experience without paying the price at which they purchased it.

In the desire which every man feels to learn the history, and be instructed by the example of his predecessors, and in the accompanying disposition, with the means of carrying it into effect, to transmit a knowledge of himself and his own times to his successors, we discover the wise and admirable arrangement of a providence, which removes the worn out individual to a better country, but leaves the acquisitions of his mind, and the benefit of his experience, as an accumulating and common fund, for the use of his posterity—which has secured the continued renovation of the race, without the loss of the wisdom of each generation.

These considerations suggest a much more adequate and accurate definition of history, than the celebrated one proposed by Bolingbroke—‘Philosophy teaching by example.’ They inform us that history is rather the

instrument by which the results of the great experiment of human life are collected and transmitted from age to age : speaking through the records of history, all past generations become the instructors of the present.

Since this is the true and proper design of history, it assumes an exalted station among the branches of human knowledge. Every community that aspires to become intelligent and virtuous, should cherish it. Institutions for the promotion and diffusion of useful information, should have special reference to it. And all people should be induced to look back to the days of their forefathers, to be warned by their errors, instructed by their wisdom, and stimulated in the career of improvement, by the example of their virtues.

Under the influence of these views, it has appeared to me, that I could not discharge the duty to which I have here been called, in any way more conducive to the accomplishment of the design of this association, than by presenting to its members a remarkable passage in the history of their ancestors. It shall be my design to exhibit the subject

in such a light, that the great end of history, just described, may be attained; and that when the whole scene to be disclosed has been spread out before you, you may bear away instruction and improvement from its contemplation.

The historian would find a great amount and variety of materials in the annals of this town, — greater perhaps, than in any other of its size in the country. But there is one chapter in our history of preeminent interest and importance. The witchcraft delusion of 1692 has attracted universal attention for the last century, and will, in all coming ages, render the name of Salem notable throughout the world. Wherever the name of the place we live in is mentioned, this memorable transaction will be found associated with it, and those who know nothing else of our history or our character, will be sure to know, and tauntingly to inform us that they know, that we hanged the witches.

It is surely incumbent upon us to possess ourselves of correct and just views of a transaction, thus indissolubly connected with the

reputation of our home, with the memory of our fathers, and of course with the most precious part of the inheritance of our children. I am apprehensive that the community is very superficially acquainted with this transaction. All have heard of the Salem witchcraft — hardly any are aware of the real character of that event. Its mention creates a smile of astonishment, and perhaps a sneer of contempt, or it may be, a thrill of horror for the innocent who suffered ; but there is reason to fear that it fails to suggest those reflections and impart that salutary instruction, without which the design of providence in permitting it to take place cannot be accomplished. There are, indeed, few passages in the history of any people to be compared with it in all that constitutes the pitiable and tragical, the mysterious and awful. The student of human nature will contemplate in its scenes one of the most remarkable developments which that nature ever assumed ; while the moralist, the statesman and the Christian philosopher, will, severally, find that it opens widely before them, a field fruitful in instruction.

Our ancestors have been visited with unmeasured reproach for their conduct on the occasion. Sad, indeed, was the delusion that came over them, and shocking was the extent to which their bewildered imaginations and excited passions hurried and drove them on. Still, however, there are many considerations that deserve to be well weighed before sentence is passed upon them. And, while I hope to give evidence of a readiness to have everything appear in its own just light, and to expose to view the very darkest features of the transaction, I am confident of being able to bring forward such facts and reflections as will satisfy you, that no reproach ought to be attached to them in consequence of this affair, which does not belong, at least equally, to all other nations, and to the greatest and best men of their times and of previous ages ; and in short, that the final predominating sentiment, their conduct should awaken, is not so much that of anger and indignation as of pity and compassion.

In order to do justice to the subject, it will be necessary for me to divide it into two



lectures ; — the first must be devoted to a historical narration of the proceedings in Salem, and the second will present those additional facts and considerations, that should be taken into view, previous to pronouncing a judgment, or forming an opinion respecting the conduct and characters of the persons connected with them.

Let us endeavor to carry ourselves back to the state of the colony of Massachusetts one hundred and forty years ago. The persecutions our ancestors had undergone in their own country, and the privations, altogether inconceivable by us, they suffered during the early years of their residence here, acting upon their minds and characters, in cooperation with the influences of the political and ecclesiastical occurrences that marked the commencement of the seventeenth century, had imparted a gloomy, solemn and romantic turn to their dispositions and associations, which was transmitted without diminution to their children, and was strengthened and aggravated by the peculiar circumstances of the period. It was the tri-

umphant age of superstition. The imagination had been expanded by credulity until it had reached a wild and monstrous growth. The puritans were always prone to subject themselves to its influence ; and New England, at the time to which we have referred, was a most fit and congenial theatre upon which to display its power.

Cultivation and civilization had made but a partial encroachment upon the wilderness. Wide, deep, solemn forests covered the hills, hung over the unfrequented roads, and frowned upon the scattered settlements. These forests were still the abode of wild beasts and of the Indians, in the terror of whose strange customs and warlike propensities, the European settlers were apt to lose sight of all those nobler qualities, which properly regarded and addressed would unquestionably have proved them worthy of the friendship of our ancestors.

In consequence of a want of confidence and sympathy, and of provocations incident to two races of men of dissimilar habits and feelings, thus thrown into close proximity,

conflicts and wars of the most distressing and shocking character soon arose. A strongly rooted sentiment of hostility and horror became associated in the minds of the colonists with the name of Indian. There was scarcely a village where the marks of savage violence and cruelty could not be pointed out, or an individual whose family history did not contain some illustration of the stealth, the malice, or the vengeance of the savage foe. In the year 1691, about six months previous to the commencement of the witchcraft delusion, the county of Essex was ordered to keep four scouts or companies of minutemen, consisting each of six persons, constantly in the field, to guard the frontiers against the savage enemy, and to give notice of his approach, an event then looked for every hour with the greatest alarm and apprehension. On the fifteenth of March, 1697, five years after the delusion occurred, the Indians struck terror into the hearts of the people of this county, by a sudden attack upon Haverhill, where they burned six houses, and killed or made captive about forty of the inhabitants.

There was but little communication between the several villages and settlements. To travel from Boston to Salem, for instance, which the ordinary means of conveyance enable us to do at present in less than two hours, was then the fatiguing, adventurous and doubtful work of an entire day.

It was the darkest and most desponding period in the whole history of New England. The people whose ruling passion then was, as it has ever since been, a love for constitutional rights, had a few years before been thrown into dismay by the loss of their charter, and from that time had been kept in a feverish state of anxiety respecting their future political destinies. In addition to all this, the whole sea-coast was infested with hostile privateers — ruthless pirates were continually prowling along the shores. Commerce was nearly extinguished, and great losses had been experienced by men in business. A recent expedition against Canada had exposed the colonies to the vengeance of France. The inland frontiers were constantly harassed by the warlike and vengeful

incursions of the Indians in alliance with that power. In the year 1708, several hundred Algonquin and St Francis Indians, under the command of French officers, fell upon Haverhill about break of day on the twenty-ninth of August, consigned the town to conflagration and plunder, destroyed property to the amount of one thousand pounds, massacred the minister of the congregation, Mr Rolfe, the commander of the place, Capt. Wainwright, together with nearly forty others, and carried off many more into captivity.

The province was encumbered with oppressive taxes and weighed down by a heavy debt. The sum assessed upon Salem to defray the expenses of the country at large, the year before the witchcraft prosecutions, was one thousand three hundred and fortysix pounds one shilling. Besides this there were the town taxes. The whole amounted no doubt to more than six thousand dollars, exclusive of the support of the ministry, a weight of taxation considering the greater value of money at that time, of which we have no experience and can hardly form an

adequate conception. The burden pressed directly upon the whole community. There were then no great private fortunes, no moneyed institutions, no foreign commerce, few, if any, articles of luxury, and no large capitals to intercept and divert its pressure. It was borne to its whole extent by the actual industry of a population of extremely moderate estates, and very limited earnings, and almost crushed it to the earth.

The people were dissatisfied with the new charter. They were becoming the victims of political jealousies, discontent and animosities. They had been agitated by great revolutions. They were surrounded by alarming indications of change, and their ears were constantly assailed by rumors of war. Their minds were startled and confounded by the prevalence of prophecies and forebodings of dark and dismal events. At this most unfortunate moment, and as it were, to crown the whole, and fill up the measure of their affliction and terror, it was their universal and sober belief, that the evil being himself was in a special manner let loose,

and permitted to descend upon them with unexampled fury.

The population of what is now Salem, was at that time and continued, for nearly thirty years afterwards, to be so small, that there was but one religious society in the place. All the people were accommodated in the meetinghouse of the first church. They participated in their full share of the gloom and despondency that pervaded the province, and in addition to that, had their own peculiar troubles and distresses. Within a short time the town had lost almost all its venerable fathers and leading citizens, the men whose councils had governed and whose wisdom had guided them from the first years of the settlement of the place. Only those who are intimately acquainted with the condition of a community of simple manners and primitive feelings, such as were the early New England settlements, can have an adequate conception of the degree to which the people were attached to their patriarchs, the extent of their dependence upon them, and the amount of their loss when they were re-

moved. A separate religious society had previously been formed in what was then called Salem Village, now a part of Danvers. This congregation, the same at present under the pastoral care of Rev. Mr Braman, lately under that of the estimable Dr Wadsworth, had for a long period been the scene of one of those violent and heated dissensions, too common in our religious societies at all times. The unhappy strife was gradually propagated, until it had spread alienation and bitterness through the whole town, and finally became of such moment, that it was carried up to the General Court and was a topic of discussion and altercation there. The parties were the Rev. Samuel Parris on the one side, and a large portion of his congregation on the other.

It was while this conflict was going on, and in the midst of all this local trouble and general distress, that the great and awful tragedy began.

Near the close of the month of February, 1692, two female children, belonging to the family of the Rev. Mr Parris, one, his daughter Elizabeth, represented to have been but



nine, and the other his niece, Abigail Williams, twelve years old, together with a young female of the neighborhood, named Ann Putnam, began to act in a strange and unaccountable manner. They would creep into holes, and under benches and chairs, put themselves into odd postures, make antic gestures, and utter loud outcries and ridiculous, incoherent and unintelligible expressions. The attention of the family was arrested. No account or explanation of the conduct of the children could be given, and, in an evil hour physicians were called in and consulted. One of the physicians gave it as his opinion that the children were *bewitched*.

It is proper, before we proceed any further, to explain what was meant by this opinion. There are several words and expressions, that are sometimes used synonymously with witch, although they are not strictly synonymous. The following for instance,—diviner, enchanter, charmer, conjurer, necromancer, fortune-teller, augur, soothsayer, and sorcerer. None of these words convey the same idea our ancestors attached to

the word witch. Witch was sometimes specially used to signify a female, while wizard was exclusively applied to a male. The distinction was not often, however, attempted to be made — the former title was prevailingly applied to either sex. (A witch was regarded by our fathers, as a person who had made an actual, deliberate and formal compact with Satan, by which compact it was agreed that she should become his faithful subject, and do what she could in promoting his cause, and in consideration of this allegiance and service, he on his part agreed to exercise his supernatural powers in her favor, and communicate to her a portion of those powers. Thus a witch was considered in the light of a person who had transferred allegiance and worship from God to the Devil.

The existence of this compact was supposed to confer great additional power on the Devil as well as on his new subject, for the doctrine seems to have prevailed, that for him to act with effect upon men, the intervention and instrumentality of human co-

operation was necessary, and almost unlimited power was ascribed to the combined exertions of Satan, and those of the human species in league with him. A witch was believed to have the power, through her compact with the Devil, of afflicting, distressing, and rending whomever she would. She could cause them to pine away and to suffer almost every description of pain and distress. She was also believed to possess the faculty of being present in her shape or apparition at a different place from that which her actual body occupied. Indeed, an almost indefinite amount of supernatural ability, and a great freedom and variety of methods for its exercise, were supposed to result from the diabolical compact. Those upon whom she thus exercised her malignant and mysterious energies, were said to be bewitched.

When I state the fact that these opinions were not merely prevalent among the common people, but were advocated by the learning and philosophy, the science and jurisprudence of the times, none can be sur-

prised at the alarm which it created, when the belief became current, that there were those in the community who had actually entered into this dark confederacy against God and Heaven, Religion and Virtue, and that individuals were beginning to suffer from their infernal power. It cannot be considered strange that our fathers should have looked with more than common horror upon persons who had been convicted, as they thought, upon overwhelming evidence of this conspiracy with all that was evil, and this treason against all that was good.

We are now prepared to return to the narrative. One or two other young girls in the neighborhood, soon began to exhibit similar indications of being bewitched. The families to which the afflicted children belonged, immediately applied themselves to fasting and prayer, invoking the interposition of the Divine Being, to deliver them from the snares and dominion of Satan. Mr Paris invited the neighboring ministers to assemble at his house and unite with him in devoting a day to solemn religious services,

and to devout supplications to the throne of Mercy, for rescue from the power of the great enemy of souls. During the exercises of this occasion, one of the children had frequent and violent convulsion fits. These events soon became generally known in the village, and through the whole surrounding country. The public mind was prepared to sanction the opinion of the physician, and it was universally believed, that the evil one had commenced his operations with a bolder front and on a broader scale than in any previous period.

Great numbers crowded to the spot to gratify their credulous curiosity, by witnessing the effect of his influence upon the afflicted children — and all were anxious to discover by whose cooperation he thus exercised his malignant power. The pretended sufferers were incessantly importuned to declare who afflicted them. Who were the witches through whom the evil one acted upon them. At length, when they had wrought the people up to a sufficient degree of excitement, they began to select and bring

forward their victims. They first accused, or as the phrase was, 'cried out upon,' an Indian woman attached to Mr Parris' family. By operating upon the old creature's fears and imagination, and as there is some reason to apprehend, by using severe treatment towards her, she was made to confess *that the charge was true*, and that she was in league with the devil.

All can easily imagine the effect of this confession. It established beyond question or suspicion, the credibility of the accusers, and produced such a thorough conviction of their veracity in the public mind, that if any one still continued to have misgivings or doubts, it seemed to be all in vain, even if he had courage enough to dare to do it, to give them utterance. This state of things emboldened the young girls, and they proceeded to accuse two more decrepid and miserable old women, who were immediately arrested, thrown into prison, and put in irons. In the meantime, new accessions were made to the number of the afflicted accusers, owing either to the inflamed state of the imaginations of

the people, which led them to attribute their various diseases and ailments to the agency of witches, to a mere love of notoriety and a passion for general sympathy, to a desire to be secure against the charge of bewitching others, or to a malicious disposition to wreak vengeance upon enemies.

The next person accused was carried into the meetinghouse in the village, and confronted with the accusers. As soon as the poor old woman was brought in, they uttered loud screams and fell down upon the floor. If in her terror and despair she happened to clasp her hands, they would shriek out that she was pinching them. When she pressed in agony her withered lip, they exclaimed that she was biting them, and would show the marks of her teeth upon their flesh. If the dreadful excitement of the scene, added to the feebleness of age, exhausted and overcame her, and she happened to lean for support against the side of the pew or the aisle, they would cry out that their bodies were crushed; and if she changed her position, or took a single step, they would de-

clare that their feet were in pain. In this manner they artfully produced a strong conviction in the minds of the deluded magistrates and excited by-standers. On these occasions the proceedings were always introduced by prayer and addresses from the most influential ministers of the vicinity, who were decided in countenancing and active in promoting them. The afflicted, as they were called, did not rest with merely accusing their victims of having bewitched them, but testified on the stand that they had been present with them at their diabolical meetings, had witnessed them partaking in the visible company of Satan, of his blasphemous sacraments, and had seen them sign his book with their own blood.

The examination of the accused generally took place, as has always been understood, in the house still standing at the western corner of North and Essex Streets, then the residence of Jonathan Corwin, Esq., at that time an acting magistrate. His colleague in the magistracy was John Hathorne, Esq.

It may well be supposed that these events would produce a great sensation throughout



the colony. They did so. There was no discordance in the public voice, and although many individuals afterwards endeavored to make it appear that they were untouched by the delusion, I am inclined to think with the late Dr Bentley of Salem, that all honorable men and good citizens would prefer to be considered as participating in the excitement, than as having been free from it, and opposed to it, without ever daring to resist or check or reduce it. There were, however, a few who were incredulous from the beginning, and have vindicated their claim to that distinction, by openly advocating their opinions at the time. Among these were the reverend and celebrated Samuel Willard of the Old South church in Boston, who always frowned upon the proceedings, although three of the judges were members of his church ; and Major Saltonstall, who publicly expressed his disapprobation by retiring from his seat on the bench. With these and perhaps a few other exceptions, the whole community was convinced of the truth of the accusations, and that there was a dark and dia-

bolical confederacy in the land between Satan and some of the inhabitants, that threatened to overthrow and extirpate religion and morality, and to establish the kingdom of the evil one, in a country which had been dedicated by the prayers, and tears and sufferings of its pious fathers to God and the church.

While the delusion was spreading over the colony, its operations were going on with tremendous efficacy in Salem, and the neighboring towns ; additions were continually making to the number of the accusers by voluntary accessions, and by those who having been themselves accused, to save their lives, confessed, and became witnesses against others. The prisons in Salem, Cambridge and Boston were crowded with supposed witches. All the securities of society were dissolved. Every man's life was at the mercy of every other man. Fear sat on every countenance ; terror and distress were in all hearts ; silence pervaded the streets ; many of the people left the country ; all business was at a stand, and the feeling, dismal

and horrible indeed, became general, that the providence of God was removed from them, and that they were given over to the dominion of Satan.

To illustrate the condition of society at this dreadful time, I will relate the circumstances connected with the arrest of the wife of Phillip English. This gentleman was possessed of a very large estate, for that period. He owned fourteen buildings, a wharf in the lower part of the town, and twentyone sail of vessels ; his dwellinghouse is still standing, and bears the marks of having been constructed upon the best style of that day ; it is situated at the eastern termination of Essex Street, and is a venerable and curious specimen of our ancient architecture. Mrs English was a lady of accomplished education and superior endowments. In consequence of several pecuniary controversies in which her husband had been engaged with the town, and perhaps from a want of sympathy arising from other causes between his family and the poorer people of the place, they were not popular. Many persons entertained jeal-

ousies and cherished feelings of aversion towards them. This was the case with some of the accusers, and they determined to gratify their malignity by getting Mr English and his wife hanged for witchcraft. They accordingly commenced by accusing Mrs English. The officer entered her dwelling on the evening of the 21st of April, read his warrant in her bedchamber, and placed guards around the house, intending to carry her to prison the next day. So utterly hopeless at that time was the condition of any one who might happen to fall under the accusation of witchcraft, that Mrs English considered herself lost. In the morning she attended the devotions of her family, gave direction for the education of her children, kissed them, clasped them in her arms, commended them to God, bid them farewell, and then committed herself to the sheriff, declaring her readiness to die. Mr English, hoping that by placing himself beyond the reach of the prosecutors, he might more easily promote the release of his wife, either concealed himself or retired from this part of

the country. Several ineffectual attempts were made to arrest him. Finding, however, that he could not protect or rescue her from the power of the infatuated magistrates, he came forward, voluntarily surrendered himself, and expressed his determination to share her fate. They found means, however, to effect their escape, and fled to New York. It ought to be mentioned to the honor of Mr English, and never forgotten by the people of Salem, that, notwithstanding the treatment he and his family had received, he sent from the place of his refuge generous donations to our suffering poor at a season of great distress the next winter. To the honor of the people too it should be recorded, that when their fanatical delirium had passed away, they welcomed him and his family back with public rejoicings, and did everything in their power to make restitution and compensation for the injury they had inflicted upon them.

To meet the extraordinary crisis, a special commission was issued to seven of the principal citizens and jurists of the colony, constituting them a *court* to try the accused per-

sons at Salem. These were the Lieut. Governor, Mr Stoughton, Major Saltonstall, Major Richards, Major Gedney, Mr Wait Winthrop, Capt. Sewall, and Mr Sargeant. They assembled by particular appointment at the court-house in Salem, supposed to have stood at the eastern corner of Essex and Washington Streets, on the second of June, 1692. The first victim, an old woman, was executed on the tenth of June. The court then adjourned. The government during their recess consulted several of the ministers of Boston and its vicinity, respecting the prosecutions, and while they urged the importance of caution and circumspection in the methods of examination, and the admission of testimony, they at the same time decidedly and earnestly recommended that the proceedings should be vigorously carried on. And they were vigorously carried on. The court sat again on the thirtieth of June, and five more old women were hanged on the nineteenth of July. The Court sat again August fifth, and on the nineteenth of the same month, four men and one woman were

hanged. And on the twentysecond of September, two men and six women were hanged. Eight more were condemned, but this was the last execution. One man refusing to put himself on trial was pressed to death agreeably to the provisions of the English law.

The principal immediate effect of these summary and sanguinary proceedings was to render the accusers more bold, confident and daring; they began to feel that the lives of all the people were in their hands, and seemed at last to have experienced a fiendlike satisfaction in the thought of bringing infamy and death upon the best and most honored citizens of the colony; they repeatedly cried out upon the Rev. Mr Willard, before mentioned, the author of the 'Body of Divinity,' one of the most revered and beloved ministers of the times. They accused a member of the immediate family of Dr Increase Mather, who had recently returned from a special embassy to the English court respecting the charter, and was then the President of Harvard College—the man whom Elliott calls 'the father of the New England clergy,'

—and whose name and character have been held in veneration by his contemporaries and all succeeding generations. A writer of that period intimates that they accused the wife of the Governor, Sir William Phipps; they even went so far, it is said, as to implicate one of the Judges of the court.

But that which finally overthrew their power and broke the spell by which they had held the minds of the whole colony in bondage, was their accusation of Mrs Hale, the wife of the minister of the first church in Beverly. Her genuine and distinguished virtues had won for her a reputation, and secured in the hearts of the people a confidence, which superstition itself could not sully nor shake. Mr Hale had been active in all the previous proceedings; but he knew the innocence and piety of his wife, and he stood forth between her and the storm he had helped to raise; although he had driven it on while others were its victims, he turned and resisted it, when it burst in upon his own dwelling. In crying out upon Mrs Hale, the whole community was convinced



that the accusers had perjured themselves, and from that moment their power was destroyed ; the awful delusion ceased ; the curtain fell, and a close was put to one of the most tremendous tragedies in the history of real life. The wildest storm, perhaps, that ever raged in the moral world, instantly became a calm ; the tide that had threatened to overwhelm everything in its fury, sunk back in a moment to its peaceful bed. There are few, if any other, instances in history, of a revolution of opinion and feeling, so sudden, so rapid, and so complete. The images and visions that had possessed the bewildered imaginations of the people, flitted away and left them standing in the clear sunshine of reason, and their senses, and they could have exclaimed, as they witnessed them passing off, in the language of the great master of the drama, and of human nature, but that their rigid puritan principles, would not, it is presumed, have permitted them, even in that moment of rescue and deliverance, to quote Shakspeare —

‘ See ! they’re gone —

The earth has bubbles, as the waters have,

**And these are some of them : they vanished  
Into the air, and what seemed corporal,  
Melted as breath into the wind.'**

During the prevalence of this fanaticism, twenty persons lost their lives by the hand of the executioner. As they died innocent of the crime imputed to them, and maintained their integrity to the last, preferring to suffer an ignominious and horrible death, rather than increase the delusion of the times, by feigning a confession in order to save their lives, it will be proper to recall their names from oblivion, and while we reverse the sentence that was passed upon them, pay them our tribute of respect for their firmness and veracity, and of pity for their dreadful sufferings and fate. I shall mention the places of their usual residence, in order to shew how the delusion pervaded the country.

Rev. George Burroughs of Wells, Samuel Wardwell of Andover, Wilmot Reed of Marblehead, Margaret Scott of Rowley, Susanna Martin of Amesbury, Elizabeth How of Ipswich, Sarah Wildes and Mary Easty of Topsfield, Martha Carrier and Mary Par-

ker of Andover, John Proctor, John Willard, Sarah Good, Rebecca Nurse and Martha Cory of Salem Village, George Jacobs, Jr, Alice Parker, Ann Pudeater, Bridget Bishop, alias Oliver, of Salem. Giles Cory of Salem was pressed to death. Most of these persons were advanced in years, and many of them left large families of children. The following were condemned to death but did not suffer : Abigail Faulkner, Mary Lacy and Ann Foster of Andover, Dorcas Hoar of Beverly, Mary Bradbury of Salisbury, Rebecca Eames of Boxford, Abigail Hobbs of Topsfield, and Elizabeth Proctor of Salem Village. Besides these, fiftyfive persons escaped death by confessing themselves guilty, one hundred and fifty were in prison, and more than two hundred others accused.

One adventurous and noble spirited young man found means to effect his mother's escape from confinement, fled with her on horseback from the vicinity of the jail, and secreted her in the Blueberry Swamp, not far from Tapley's brook in the Great Pasture ; he protected her concealment there

until after the delusion had passed away, provided food and clothing for her, erected a wigwam for her shelter, and surrounded her with every comfort her situation would admit of. The poor creature must, however, have endured a great amount of suffering, for one of her larger limbs was fractured in the all but desperate enterprise of rescuing her from the prison. Immediately upon the termination of the excitement, all who were in prison were pardoned. Nothing more was heard of the afflicted or the confessors; they were never called to account for their malicious imposture and perjury. It was apprehended that a judicial investigation might renew the excitement and delusion, and all were anxious to consign the whole subject as speedily and effectually as possible to oblivion.

It should be mentioned before this review of the outlines of the proceedings is concluded, that the diabolical compact was not considered as confined to the human species, but that other animals were suspected of entering into it. Several dogs were accused

of witchcraft, and two, one in Salem Village, the other in Andover, suffered the penalties of the law, and are recorded among the subjects of capital punishment.

As soon as the people had recovered from their delusion, they began to reflect and review the whole transaction with a spirit of calmness and discernment. Mr Hale of Beverly, wrote a treatise respecting it, in which he offers some reasons that led him to the conclusion that there was error at the foundation of the proceedings. The following extract will show that he took a rational view of the subject. 'It may be queried, then, *How doth it appear that there was a going too far in this affair?* Answer 1st. By the number of the persons accused, it cannot be imagined, that in a place of so much knowledge, so many in so small a compass of land should so abominably leap into the devil's lap at once. Answer 2d. The quality of several of the accused was such as did bespeak better things, *and things that accompany salvation.* Persons whose blameless and holy lives before

did testify for them ; persons that had taken great pains to bring up *their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*, such as we had charity for as for our own souls, and charity,' the good man proceeds, 'is a Christian duty, commended to us in 1 Cor. 13th chap. — Col. 3 : 14, and many other places. Answer 3d. The number of the afflicted by Satan daily increased, till about fifty persons were thus vexed by the devil. This gave just ground to suspect some mistake. Answer 4th. It was considerable, that nineteen were executed, and all denied the crime to the death, and some of them were knowing persons, and had before this been accounted blameless livers. And it is not to be imagined, but that if all had been guilty, some would have had so much tenderness as to seek mercy for their souls in the way of confession and sorrow for such a sin. Answer 5. When this prosecution ceased, the Lord so chained up Satan, that the afflicted grew presently well ; the accused are generally quiet, and for five years since, we have no such molestation by

them.' Such reasonings as these soon found their way into the minds of the whole community, and it became the melancholy conviction of all candid and considerate persons that much innocent blood had been shed. Standing where we do, with the lights that surround us, we look back upon the whole scene as an awful perversion of justice, reason and truth. In reviewing the events that have now been related, several topics suggest themselves, which, if we wish to possess a thorough knowledge of the transaction, it will be necessary to consider. I shall endeavor to discuss them with as much compression and brevity as possible.

The evidence by which the convictions were procured is particularly deserving of notice. There were certain signs by which it was thought witches could be detected, and these signs were not only established in the faith of the people, but were to a great extent sanctioned by the courts.

It was the received opinion that a person in confederacy with the evil one could not weep; those accused were for the most part of an age

and condition, which rendered it impossible for them, however innocent they might have been, to escape the fatal effects of this test. A poor, haggard, decrepid old woman, was put to the bar, and if she could not weep on the spot, if in consequence of her withered frame, her amazement and indignation at the false and malicious charges by which she was circumvented, her stupified sensibility, her sullen despair, the hopeless horror of her situation, or if from any other cause, the fountain of her tears was closed or dried up, her inability to call them forth at the bid of her malignant prosecutors was regarded as an infallible proof of guilt.

It was believed that Satan affixed his mark to the bodies of those in alliance with him, and that the point where this mark was made became callous and dead. It was the practice to commit the prisoner to the scrutiny of a jury of the same sex. They would pierce the body with pins, and if, as was to have been expected, particularly in aged persons, any spot could be found insensible to the torture, it was looked upon as visible evidence,



ocular demonstration of guilt. In conducting this examination, it was the custom to shave the head of the miserable victim.

It should be mentioned, that although they were in some instances permitted to be used, these barbarous and inhuman practices were not countenanced by our forefathers to the same extent as in England and all other countries.

Then there was the evidence of ocular fascination. The accused and the accusers were brought into the presence of the examining magistrate, and the supposed witch was ordered to look upon the afflicted persons, instantly ; upon coming within the glance of her eye, they would scream out, and fall down as in a fit. It was thought that an invisible and impalpable fluid, darted from the eye of the witch, and penetrated the brain of the bewitched. By bringing the witch so near that she could touch the afflicted persons with her hand, the malignant fluid was attracted back into the hand, and the sufferers recovered their senses. It is singular to notice the curious resemblance between this

opinion, the joint product of superstition and imposture, and the results to which modern science has led us in the discoveries of galvanism and animal electricity. The doctrine of fascination maintained its hold upon the public credulity for a long time, and gave occasion to the phrase, still in familiar use among us, of 'looking upon a person with an evil eye.' Its advocates claimed in its defence the authority of the Cartesian philosophy, but it cannot be considered in an age of science and reason, as having any better support than the rural superstition of Virgil's simple shepherd, who thus complains of the condition of his emaciated flock : —

————— ' they look so thin,  
 Their bones are barely covered with their skin ;  
 What magic has bewitched the woolly dams ?  
 And what ill eyes beheld the tender lambs ?'\*

If anything strange or remarkable could be discovered in the persons, histories, or deportment of the prisoners, it was permitted to be brought against them in evidence. Cotton Mather was employed to compile

\* ————— ' vix ossibus hærent,  
 Nescio, quis teneros oculus mihi fascinat agnos.'

and publish a report of some of the trials. He adduces the following proof of the guilt of the Rev. Mr Burroughs. 'God,' says he, 'had been pleased so to leave this George Burroughs, that he had ensnared himself by several instances which he had formerly given of preternatural strength, and which were now produced against him. He was a very puny man, yet he had often done things beyond the strength of a giant. A gun of about seven foot barrel, and so heavy that strong men could not steadily hold it out with both hands; there were several testimonies given in by persons of credit and honor, that he made nothing of taking up such a gun behind the lock with but one hand, and holding it out like a pistol at arms' end. Yea, there were two testimonies that George Burroughs with only putting the forefinger of his right hand into the muzzle of a heavy gun, a fowling-piece of about six or seven foot barrel, did lift up the gun and hold it out at arms' end, a gun which the deponents thought strong men could not with both hands lift up and hold at the butt end as is usual.'

I will quote another passage to the same point, from Dr Mather's report. It relates to the first trial, that of Bridget Bishop, alias Oliver. 'There was one very strange thing more with which the court was newly entertained. As this woman was under a guard, passing by the great and spacious meeting-house of Salem,' (the building that preceded the one recently taken down to give place to the present meetinghouse of the first church, and situated on the same spot) 'she gave a look towards the house, and immediately a Demon, invisibly entering the meetinghouse, tore down a part of it, so that though there was no person to be seen there, yet the people, at the noise, running in, found a board which was strongly fastened with several nails, transported unto another quarter of the house.'

So far as we have now reviewed the evidence, none has been found that would have been thought to justify a jury, even of that period, in rendering a verdict of guilty. But there was much stronger evidence than any we have yet considered, before the jury, that

condemned the reputed Salem witches. There were many witnesses who swore that the individuals accused, had afflicted them with pain, destroyed their rest, robbed them of their goods, caused them to pine, and distressed them in a great variety of modes; they produced the identical pins, with which they declared the accused persons had tormented them; these pins were filed away, as usual, with the other evidence, and are at this day to be seen, among the records of the trials, in the office of the clerk of our courts. Some of these witnesses were persons formerly of respectable and irreproachable characters. Their testimony was delivered with great apparent sincerity. In several cases, they swore that they had suffered under the malignant influence for a long period, even of twenty or thirty years. Three or four of the accusers would appear to be thrown into agony by the mere presence of the prisoners, and declared that while giving their evidence in court, they were tormented by them. In one instance, the hands of the witness were tied strongly together by a rope

during the delivery of her evidence while on the stand, and she swore that it was done by an invisible agent employed by the prisoner at the bar.

But there was one species of evidence that rendered all the rest unnecessary, and overwhelmed the minds of the court, the jury, the public, and, perhaps in many instances, the unhappy prisoners themselves, with conviction. The confessions. Fiftyfive persons, many of them previously of the most unquestionable character for intelligence, virtue and piety, acknowledged the truth of the charges that were made against them — confessed that they were witches and had made a compact with the devil. The records of these confessions have been preserved. They relate the particulars that attended the interviews the confessing persons had held with the evil one, declared that they signed his little red book, as they described it, were present at his impious sacraments, and had ridden on sticks through the air, several of them in company all the way from Andover to Salem, to a diabolical meeting convened there.

They specify the exact places where the sacraments of the devil were celebrated. It seems that he was accustomed to baptize his converts at Newbury Falls. They were organized, as Dr Mather observes, 'much after the manner of a Congregational church.' The confessions of the New England witches describe the person and deportment of Satan with considerable minuteness. He generally appeared to them in the guise of a well dressed black man, and the usual place in which he convened his assemblies, was a wide open field in Salem Village. The hour of meeting was most frequently that of deep midnight. The received opinion of the age authorized his appearance under a great variety of shapes, sometimes that of a negro, sometimes of an Indian, sometimes of a goat, and sometimes of a huge black dog.

The confessing witches go on to acknowledge that in the malignant exercise of the power acquired by the compact with Satan, they had actually afflicted the accusers in the manner and form alleged. It cannot, indeed, be a matter of surprise to any one

that such declarations and confessions had a very powerful effect upon a jury, when the greatest philosophers as well as the common people believed in the reality of witchcraft. This consideration must be borne in mind continually while we contemplate the proceedings.

One more circumstance remains to be mentioned in connexion with the evidence. It was believed that when the witches found it inconvenient from any cause to execute their infernal designs upon those whom they wished to afflict, by going to them in person, they transformed themselves into the likeness of some animal, such as a cat, rat, mouse or toad. They also had imps under their control. These imps were generally supposed to bear the resemblance of some small insect, such as a fly or a spider. The latter animal was prevailingly considered as most likely to bear this character. The accused person was closely watched in order that the spider imp might be seen when it approached to obtain its nourishment, as it was thought to do, from the witchmark on



her body. Within the cells of a prison, spiders were of course often seen. Whenever one made its appearance, the guard attacked it with all the zeal and vehemence, with which it was natural and proper to assault an agent of the wicked one. If the spider was killed in the encounter, it was considered as an innocent animal, and all suspicion was removed from its character. But if it escaped into a crack or crevice of the apartment, as spiders often do when assaulted, all doubt of its guilty connexion with the prisoner was removed, it was set down as beyond question or cavil, her veritable imp, and the evidence of her confederacy with the devil was regarded thenceforward as complete. It was believed, moreover, that witches could send their own spectres or apparitions, or the spectres of those with whom they were confederate to fulfil their commissions.

It is obvious that where courts of justice, countenanced the popular credulity in maintaining this doctrine, there was no security left to the individual accused. No matter how clear and certain the evidence adduced

by him, that at the time alleged he was absent from the specified place. No matter how far distant, whether twenty or twenty thousand miles, it availed him nothing, he was present through his agent or imp. When accused of having been present in his own proper bodily shape, it did not break down nor impair in the least the force of the accusation, to prove that at the time he was in another place, at a great distance, for it was immediately contended that he was present in the shape or spectral illusion, by which Satan enabled him to act any and everywhere at once. It was impossible to disprove the accusation, however false it might be, and the last defence of innocence was swept away. It deserves to be mentioned with respect to this spectral evidence, as it was called, that, although generally admitted in other countries, it never received the unqualified or undisputed sanction of public opinion here.

There are two inquiries that must have engaged the meditations of all reflecting persons who have followed me thus far. One

is this : What are we to think of those persons who commenced and continued the accusations, of the afflicted children and their confederates. Shocking as is the view it presents of the extent to which human nature can be carried in depravity, I am constrained to declare, as the result of as thorough a scrutiny as I could institute, my belief that this dreadful transaction was introduced and driven on by wicked perjury and wilful malice. The young girls in Mr Parris' family and their associates, on several occasions, indicated by their conduct and expressions that they were acting a part:

It may be that, in some instances, the steps they took and the testimony they bore may be explained by referring to the mysterious energies of the imagination, the power of enthusiasm, the influence of sympathy, and the general prevalence of credulity, ignorance, superstition and fanaticism at the time ; and it is not probable that when they began they had any idea of the tremendous length to which they were finally led on.

It was perhaps their original design to gratify a love of notoriety or of mischief, by

creating a sensation and excitement in their neighborhood, or at the worst to wreak their vengeance upon one or two individuals who had offended them. They soon, however, became intoxicated by the terrible success of their imposture, and were swept along by the phrensy they had occasioned. It would be much more congenial with our feelings to believe that these misguided and wretched young persons early in the proceedings became themselves victims of the delusion into which they plunged every one else. But we are forbidden to form this charitable judgment by the manifestations of art and contrivance, of deliberate cunning and cool malice they exhibited to the end. Once or twice they were caught in their own snare, and nothing but the blindness of the bewildered community saved them from disgraceful exposure, and well deserved punishment. They appeared as the prosecutors of almost every poor creature that was tried, and seemed ready to bear testimony against any one, upon whom suspicion might happen to fall. It is dreadful to reflect upon the enormity of

their wickedness, if they were conscious of imposture throughout. It seems to transcend the capabilities of human crime. There is, perhaps a slumbering element in the heart of man, that sleeps forever in the bosom of the innocent and good, and requires the perpetration of a great sin, to wake it into action, but which when once aroused, impels the transgressor onward with increasing momentum, as the descending ball is accelerated in its course. It may be that crime begets an appetite for crime, which like all other appetites is not quieted but inflamed by gratification.

It is obvious, that during the prevalence of the fanaticism, it was in the power of every man to bring down terrible vengeance upon his enemies, by pretending to be bewitched by them.

There is great reason to fear that this was often the case. If any one ventured to resist the proceedings, or to intimate a doubt respecting the guilt of the persons accused, the accusers would consider it as an affront

to them, and proceed instantly to cry out against him.

The wife of an honest and worthy man in Andover, was sick of a fever of which she finally died ; during her illness it occurred to him, after all the usual means had failed to cure her, that she might be bewitched. He went directly to Salem Village to ask the afflicted persons there who had bewitched his wife. Two of them returned with him to Andover. Never did a place receive more inauspicious visitors. Soon after their arrival they contrived to get more than fifty of the inhabitants imprisoned, several of whom were afterwards hanged for witchcraft. A Mr Bradstreet, the magistrate of the place, after having committed about forty persons to jail on their accusation, concluded that he had done enough, and declined to arrest any more ; the consequence was that they accused him and his wife of being witches, and they had to fly for their lives. A person by the name of Willard, who had been employed to guard the pris-

oners to and from the jail, had the humanity to sympathise with the sufferers, and the courage to express his unwillingness to continue any longer in the odious employment. This was very offensive to the afflicted children. They accordingly charged him with bewitching them. The unhappy man was condemned to death ; he contrived to escape from prison ; they were thrown into the greatest distress ; the news came that he was retaken ; their agonies were moderated, and at length he was hanged, and then they were wholly relieved. It should be added, that many of the accusers turned out afterwards very badly, becoming profligate and abandoned characters.

There is something very dark about the case of Mr Burroughs. He had formerly preached as a candidate at Salem Village, and had received an invitation to settle in the ministry of the church in that place. While there, he had been brought into collision with some of the inhabitants. There are strong indications of personal malice, arising from this old animosity in the pro-

ceedings against him at his trial. After the delusion had passed away, several ecclesiastical councils were convened at Salem Village to compose difficulties that had arisen between Mr Parris, and many of his people. It is evident from the documents connected with the proceedings of these councils, that the disaffected members of his society regarded his conduct in the preceding tragedy with an aversion and horror, that can only be accounted for on the hypothesis, that they suspected him of having acted, not merely under the influence of an indiscreet enthusiasm, but from dishonest and malignant motives.

Their suspicion was very much confirmed by the circumstance that the old Indian woman, who, by declaring herself guilty of the charge of witchcraft, first gave credit and power to the accusers, always asserted that she was whipped by Mr Parris until she consented to make a confession. But however it may have been with him — and, in the absence of conclusive testimony, we must leave his guilt or innocence to the decisions of a



higher tribunal — so strong and deeply rooted were the feelings of disapprobation and aversion towards him which occupied the breasts of his disaffected parishioners, that all attempts on the part of the other churches to produce a reconciliation, and even his own humble and solemn acknowledgment of his error, were unavailing, and he was compelled to resign his situation and remove from the place.

The other inquiry is this. Since it is, at present, the universal opinion that the whole of this witchcraft transaction was a delusion, having no foundation whatever but in the imaginations and passions, and as it is now certain, that all the accused both the condemned and the pardoned were entirely innocent, how can it be explained that so many were led to confess themselves guilty? The answer to this question is to be found in those general principles that have led the wisest legislators and jurists to the conclusion that although on their face and at first thought, they appear to be the very best kind of evidence, yet maturely considered, confessions

made under the hope of a benefit, and sometimes even without the impulses of such a hope, are to be received with great caution and wariness. Here were fiftyfive persons, many of them of worthy characters, many of them professors of religion, who declared themselves guilty of a capital, nay, a diabolical crime, of which we know they were innocent. It is probable that the motive of self-preservation influenced most of them. An awful death was in immediate prospect. They saw no escape from the wiles of their malignant accusers. The delusion had obtained full possession of the people, the witnesses, the jury and the court. By acknowledging a compact with Satan, they might in a moment secure their lives and liberty. Their principles could not withstand the temptation. They made a confession and were rewarded by a pardon.

Each confession served to heighten the public infatuation, and aggravate the general calamity, by increasing the authority of the accusers. The unhappy confessors could not but perceive this, they saw that they had

given fresh strength to an arm that was continually stretched out to destroy the innocent. The reproaches<sup>a</sup> of conscience in some instances prevailed, and they took back their confessions. One man, an inhabitant of Andover, retracted, and was put to death.

It is the most melancholy reflection suggested by this awful history, that those only suffered whose principles were so strong, that even the fear of death, combined with the love of life, could not persuade them to utter a falsehood. You cannot, however, receive from any description, I could give you, so satisfactory an explanation of the inducements, that prevailed upon some of the accused to do violence to their moral sense, by confessing a guilt that did not belong to them, as from their own words.

The following is the recantation of a young woman who had been prevailed upon to confess and become a witness against the Rev. Mr Burroughs and also against her own grandfather, who, mainly upon the strength of her evidence, were condemned and executed.

‘ The humble declaration of Margaret Jacobs, unto the honored court now sitting at Salem, sheweth, — That whereas your poor and humble declarant, being closely confined here in Salem gaol, for the crime of witchcraft, which crime, thanks be to the Lord, I am altogether ignorant of, as will appear at the great day of judgment. May it please the honored court, I was cried out upon by some of the possessed persons, as afflicting them ; whereupon, I was brought to my examination, which persons at the sight of me fell down, which did very much startle and affright me. The Lord above knows I knew nothing, in the least measure, how or who afflicted them ; they told me, without doubt I did, or else they would not fall down at me ; they told me if I would not confess, I should be put down into the dungeon and would be hanged ; but if I would confess I should have my life ; the which did so affright me, with my own vile wicked heart, to save my life, made me make the like confession I did, which confession, may it please the honored court, is altogether false and un-

true. The very first night after I had made confession, I was in such horror of conscience that I could not sleep, for fear the devil should carry me away for telling such horrid lies. I was, may it please the honored court, sworn to my confession, as I understand since, but then, at that time, was ignorant of it, not knowing what an oath did mean. The Lord, I hope, in whom I trust, out of the abundance of his mercy, will forgive me my false forswearing myself. What I said was altogether false, against my grandfather and Mr Burroughs, which I did to save my life and to have my liberty; but the Lord, charging it to my conscience, made me in so much horror, that I could not contain myself, before I had denied my confession, which I did, though I saw nothing but death before me, choosing rather death with a quiet conscience, than to live in such horror, which I could not suffer. Where, upon my denying my confession, I was committed to close prison, where I have enjoyed more felicity in spirit a thousand times, than I did before in my enlargement. And now,

may it please your honors, your declarant having in part given your honors a description of my condition, do leave it to your honors' pious and judicious discretions to take pity and compassion on my young and tender years; to act and do with me as the Lord above and your honors shall see good, having no friend but the Lord to plead my cause for me; not being guilty in the least measure, of the crime of witchcraft, nor any other sin that deserves death from man; and your poor and humble declarant shall forever pray, as she is bound in duty, for your honors' happiness in this life, and eternal felicity in the world to come.—So prays your honors' declarant,

MARGARET JACOBS.'

The following letter was written by this same young person to her father. Let it be observed that her grandfather had already been executed upon her false testimony. Her father had saved himself by flying from the country. And her mother was in prison waiting her trial for witchcraft.

From the dungeon in Salem prison,

AUGUST, 20TH, 1692.

HONORED FATHER.—After my humble duty remembered to you, hoping in the Lord of your good health, as blessed be God I enjoy, though in abundance of affliction, being close confined here in a loathsome dungeon ; the Lord look down in mercy upon me, not knowing how soon I shall be put to death, by means of the afflicted persons ; my grandfather having suffered already, and all his estate seized for the king. The reason of my confinement is this : I having, through the magistrates' threatenings, and my own vile and wretched heart, confessed several things contrary to my conscience and knowledge, though to the wounding of my own soul, (the Lord pardon me for it ;) but oh ! the terrors of a wounded conscience who can bear ? But blessed be the Lord, he would not let me go on in my sins, but in mercy, I hope, to my soul, would not suffer me to keep it any longer ; but I was forced to confess the truth of all before the magistrates, who would not believe me ; but it is

their pleasure to put me in here, and God knows how soon I shall be put to death. Dear Father, let me beg your prayers to the Lord on my behalf, and send us a joyful and happy meeting in heaven. My mother, poor woman, is very crazy, and remembers her kind love to you, and to uncle, viz. D. A. So leaving you to the protection of the Lord, I rest your dutiful daughter,

MARGARET JACOBS.

Her prayer was heard. Her Christian penitence and heroic fortitude were rewarded. A temporary illness prevented her being tried at the appointed time, and before the next sitting of the court, the delusion had passed away.

But there can be no doubt that in several cases, the confessing persons sincerely believed themselves guilty. To explain this, we must look into the secret chambers of the human soul ; we must read the history of the imagination, and consider its power over the belief. We must transport ourselves to the dungeon, and think of its dark and awful walls, its galling confinement, its clanking



chains, its scanty fare, and all its dismal and painful circumstances. We must reflect upon their influence over a terrified and agitated, an injured and broken spirit. We must think of the situation of the poor prisoner, cut off from hope, hearing from all quarters, and at all times, morning, noon and night, that there is no doubt of his guilt, surrounded and overwhelmed by accusations and evidence, gradually, but insensibly mingling and confounding the visions and vagaries of his troubled dreams, with the reveries of his waking hours, until his reason becomes obscured, his recollections are thrown into derangement, his mind loses the power of distinguishing between what is perpetually told him by others and what belongs to the suggestions of his own memory; his imagination at last gains complete ascendancy over his other faculties, and he believes and declares himself guilty of crimes, of which he is as innocent as the child unborn. The history of the transaction we have been considering, affords a clear illustration of the truth and reasonableness of this explanation.

I will present to you a declaration made by six respectable females, belonging to Andover, who had been induced to confess during the prevalence of the delusion. It is accompanied by a paper signed by more than fifty of the most respectable inhabitants of that town; testifying to their good character, in which it is said, that 'by their sober, godly and exemplary conversation, they have obtained a good report in the place, where they have been well esteemed and approved in the church of which they are members.'

'We whose names are underwritten, inhabitants of Andover; whereas that horrible and tremendous judgment, beginning at Salem Village, in the year 1692, by some called witchcraft, first breaking forth at Mr Parris' house, several young persons being seemingly afflicted, did accuse several persons for afflicting them, and many there believing it so to be, we being informed, that, if a person was sick, the afflicted person could tell what or who was the cause of that sickness. Joseph Ballard, of Andover, his wife being sick at the same time, he, either from himself,

or by the advice of others, fetched two of the persons, called the afflicted persons, from Salem Village to Andover, which was the beginning of that dreadful calamity that befel us in Andover, believing the said accusations to be true, sent for the said persons to come together to the meetinghouse in Andover, the afflicted persons being there. After Mr Barnard had been at prayer, we were blindfolded and our hands were laid upon the afflicted persons, they being in their fits, and falling into their fits at our coming into their presence, as they said ; and some led us and laid our hands upon them, and then they said they were well, and that we were guilty of afflicting them. Whereupon we were all seized as prisoners, by a warrant from the justice of the peace, and forthwith carried to Salem. And by reason of that sudden surprisal, we knowing ourselves altogether innocent of that crime, we were all exceedingly astonished and amazed, and consternated and affrighted, even out of our reason ; and our nearest and dearest relations, seeing us in that dreadful condition, and knowing

our great danger, apprehended there was no other way to save our lives, as the case was then circumstanced, but by our confessing ourselves to be such and such persons as the afflicted represented us to be, they, out of tenderness and pity, persuaded us to confess, what we did confess. And, indeed, that confession, that it is said we made, was no other than what was suggested to us by some gentlemen, they telling us that we were witches, and they knew it, and we knew it, which made us think that it was so ; and our understandings, our reason, our faculties almost gone, we were not capable of judging of our condition ; as also the hard measures they used with us, rendered us incapable of making our defence, but said anything, and everything which they desired, and most of what we said, was but in effect a consenting to what they said. Some time after, when we were better composed, they telling us what we had confessed, we did profess that we were innocent and ignorant of such things ; and we hearing that Samuel Wardwell had renounced his confession, and was quickly after

condemned and executed, some of us were told we were going after Wardwell.

MARY OSGOOD,  
SARAH WILSON,  
ABIGAIL BARKER,  
DELIVERANCE DANE,  
MARY TYLER,  
HANNAH TYLER.'

The facility with which persons can be persuaded, by perpetually assailing them with accusations of the truth of a charge, even when it is made against themselves, that in reality is not true, has been frequently noticed. Addison, in one of the numbers of his *Spectator*, speaks of it in connexion with our present subject. — 'When an old woman,' says he 'begins to doat, and grow chargeable to a parish, she is generally turned into a witch, and fills the whole country with extravagant fancies, imaginary distempers, and terrifying dreams. In the meantime, the poor wretch, that is the innocent occasion of so many evils, begins to be frightened at herself, and sometimes confesses secret commerces, and familiarities that her imagi-

nation forms in a delirious old age. This frequently cuts off charity from the greatest objects of compassion, and inspires people with a malevolence towards those poor decrepid parts of our species in whom human nature is defaced by infirmity and dotage.\*

This passage is important, in addition to the bearing it has upon the point under consideration, as describing the state of opinion and feeling in England, twenty years after the fanaticism had passed away in Salem.

As it is one of the leading designs of these lectures to shew to what an extent of error and passion, even good men may be carried, when they have abandoned their reason, and relinquished the exercise of their judgment, and given themselves over to the impulses of imagination and feeling, I am bound, painful as it is to do it, to present to your notice some instances of glaring misconduct and inhumanity, that marked the proceed-

\* For some excellent observations on the value of confessions as evidence, I would refer the reader to Art. XXI. Vol. 10, of North American Review, written by the late Mr Gallison.

ings of the magistrates, judges, ministers and other principal citizens.

A great many irregularities were permitted at the trials, and the most absurd cruelties were practised in all stages of the proceedings. The following account given by a respectable citizen of Charlestown, is, no doubt, substantially correct, and presents a lively view of the methods of examination and of the sufferings of the accused.

*May 24th.* — I having heard, some days, that my wife was accused of witchcraft ; being much disturbed at it, by advice went to Salem Village, to see if the afflicted knew her ; we arrived there on the twentyfourth of May ; it happened to be a day appointed for examination ; accordingly, soon after our arrival Mr Hathorn and Mr Curwin, &c, went to the meetinghouse, which was the place appointed for that work ; the minister began with prayer ; and having taken care to get a convenient place, I observed that the afflicted were two girls of about ten years old, and about two or three others of about eighteen ; one of the girls talked most, and could discern more than the rest.

‘The prisoners were called in one by one, and as they come in, were cried out at, &c. The prisoners were placed about seven or eight feet from the justices, and the accusers between the justices and them; the prisoners were ordered to stand right before the justices, with an officer appointed to hold each hand, lest they should therewith afflict them; and the prisoners’ eyes must be constantly on the justices; for if they looked on the afflicted, they would either fall into fits, or cry out of being hurt by them. After an examination of the prisoners, who it was afflicted these girls, &c, they were put upon saying the Lord’s prayer, as a trial of their guilt. After the afflicted seemed to be out of their fits, they would look steadfastly on some one person, and frequently not speak; and then the justices said they were struck dumb, and after a little time would speak again; then the justices said to the accusers, Which of you will go and touch the prisoner at the bar? Then the most courageous would adventure, but before they had made three steps, would ordinarily fall down



as in a fit ; the justices ordered that they should be taken up and carried to the prisoner, that she might touch them, and as soon as they were touched by the accused, the justices would say, they are well, before I could discern any alteration ; by which I observed that the justices understood the manner of it. Thus far I was only as a spectator ; my wife also was there part of the time, but no notice was taken of her by the afflicted, except once or twice they came to her and asked her name. But I, having an opportunity to discourse Mr Hale (with whom I had formerly acquaintance), I took his advice what I had best do, and desired of him that I might have an opportunity to speak with her that accused my wife ; which he promised should be, I acquainting him that I reposed my trust in him. Accordingly, he came to me after the examination was over, and told me I had now an opportunity to speak with the said accuser, Abigail Williams, a girl eleven or twelve years old ; but that we could not be in private at Mr Parris' house, as he had promised me ; we

went therefore into the alehouse, where an Indian man attended us, who it seems was one of the afflicted ; to him we gave some cider ; he showed several scars, that seemed as if they had been long there, and showed them as done by witchcraft, and acquainted us that his wife, who also was a slave, was imprisoned for witchcraft. And now, instead of one accuser they all came in, and began to tumble down like swine ; and then three women were called in to attend them. We in the room were all at a stand, to see who they would cry out of ; but in a short time they cried out, Cary ; and immediately after a warrant was sent from the justices to bring my wife before them, who were sitting in a chamber near by, waiting for this. Being brought before the justices her chief accusers were two girls. My wife declared to the justices, that she never had any knowledge of them before that day. She was forced to stand with her arms stretched out. I requested that I might hold one of her hands, but it was denied me ; then she desired me to wipe the tears from her eyes, and the

sweat from her face which I did ; then she desired she might lean herself on me, saying she should faint. Justice Hathorn replied she had strength enough to torment these persons, and she should have strength enough to stand. I speaking something against their cruel proceedings, they commanded me to be silent, or else I should be turned out of the room. The Indian before mentioned was also brought in, to be one of her accusers ; being come in, he now (when before the justices) fell down and tumbled about like a hog, but said nothing. The justices asked the girls, who afflicted the Indian ; they answered, she, (meaning my wife,) and that she now lay upon him ; the justices ordered her to touch him, in order to his cure, but her head must be turned another way, lest, instead of curing, she should make him worse, by her looking on him, her hand being guided to take hold of his ; but the Indian took hold of her hand, and pulled her down on the floor, in a barbarous manner ; then his hand was taken off, and her hand put on his, and the cure was quickly wrought.

I being extremely troubled at their inhuman dealings, uttered a hasty speech, "That God would take vengeance on them, and desired that God would deliver us out of the hands of unmerciful men." Then her mittimus was writ. I did with difficulty and charge obtain the liberty of a room, but no beds in it; if there had been, could have taken but little rest that night. She was committed to Boston prison; but I obtained a habeas corpus to remove her to Cambridge prison, which is in our county of Middlesex. Having been there one night, next morning the jailer put irons on her legs, (having received such a command) the weight of them was about eight pounds; these irons and her other afflictions soon brought her into convulsion fits, so that I thought she would have died that night. I sent to entreat that the irons might be taken off; but all entreaties were in vain, if it would have saved her life, so that in this condition she must continue. The trials at Salem coming on, I went thither to see how things were managed; and finding that the spectre evidence was there received,

together with idle, if not malicious stories, against people's lives, I did easily perceive which way the rest would go ; for the same evidence that served for one would serve for all the rest. I acquainted her with her danger ; and that if she were carried to Salem to be tried, I feared she would never return. I did my utmost that she might have her trial in our own county ; I with several others petitioning the judge for it, and were put in hopes of it ; but I soon saw so much, that I understood thereby it was not intended ; which put me upon consulting the means of her escape ; which through the goodness of God was effected, and she got to Rhode Island, but soon found herself not safe when there, by reason of the pursuit after her ; from thence she went to New York along with some others that had escaped their cruel hands ; where we found his Excellency Benjamin Fletcher, Esq. Governor, who was very courteous to us. After this some of my goods were seized in a friend's hands, with whom I had left them, and myself imprisoned by the sheriff, and kept in custody

half a day, and then dismissed ; but to speak of their usage of the prisoners, and the inhumanity shown to them at the time of their execution, no sober christian could bear. They had also trials of cruel mockings ; which is the more, considering what a people for religion, I mean the profession of it, we have been ; those that suffered, being many of them church members, and most of them unspotted in their conversation, till their adversary the devil took up this method for accusing them,

JONATHAN CARY.'

Every idle rumor, everything that the gossip of the credulous or the fertile memories of the malignant could produce, that had an unfavorable bearing upon the prisoner, however foreign it might be from the indictment, was allowed to be brought in evidence before the jury. A child between five and six years of age was arrested and put into prison. Children were encouraged to become witnesses against their parents, and parents against their children. The following is a part of the testimony borne by a young child against her mother.

Sarah Carrier's confessions, August the 11th, 1692.

‘ It was asked Sarah Carrier by the magistrates or justices, John Hathorne, Esq, and others; How long hast thou been a witch? *A.* Ever since I was six years old. *Q.* How old are you now? *A.* Near eight years old; brother Richard, says I shall be eight years old in November next.

*Q.* Who made you a witch? *A.* My mother, she made me set my hand to a book.

*Q.* How did you set your hand to it? *A.* I touched it with my fingers, and the book was red, the paper of it was white. She said she never had seen the black man; the place where she did it was in Andrew Foster's pasture, and Elizabeth Johnson, Jr, was there. Being asked who was there besides, she answered, her aunt Toothaker, and her cousin. Being asked when it was, she said, when she was baptized. *Q.* What did they promise to give you? *A.* A black dog. *Q.* Did the dog ever come to you? *A.* No. *Q.* But you said you saw a cat once: what did that say to you. *A.* It

said it would tear me in pieces, if I would not set my hand to the book. She said, her mother baptized her, and the devil, or black man was not there, as she saw, and her mother said when she baptized her, Thou art mine forever and ever. Amen. Q. How did you afflict folks? A. I pinched them, and she said she had no puppets, but she went to them that she afflicted. Being asked whether she went in her body or her spirit. She said in her spirit. She said her mother carried her thither to afflict. Q. How did your mother carry you when she was in prison? A. She came like a black cat. Q. How did you know it was your mother? A. The cat told me so, that she was my mother. She said she afflicted Phelps' child last Saturday, and Elizabeth Johnson joined with her to do it. She had a wooden spear, about as long as her finger, of Elizabeth Johnson and she had it of the devil. She would not own that she had ever been at the witch meeting at the village. This is the substance.

Attest.      SIMON WILLARD.'



In concluding his report of the trial of the unhappy woman, whose young children were thus induced to become the instruments for procuring her death, Dr Cotton Mather expresses himself in the following language, 'this rampant hag, Martha Carrier, was the person of whom the confessions of the witches, and of her own children among the rest, agreed, that the devil had promised her, she should be Queen of Hell.'

One woman was induced to bear witness against her husband ; it was of course false, and it was fatal to him. Well may we sympathize with Hutchinson, who declares that he shudders while he relates such monstrous violations of the principles of law, as well as nature. At the examination of the prisoners before the magistrate at the time of their commitment, they were interrogated at great length and minutely ; leading questions were put to them, and they were led to ensnare themselves as much as possible. The minutes of these examinations were preserved and brought in evidence against them at their trials. Many of them were left upon

record, and they exhibit in some cases, an extraordinary degree of sagacity and good sense on the part of the prisoners. The following dialogue between Susanna Martin and the magistrate, shews that she did not lack presence and acuteness of mind.

*Magistrate.* 'Pray what ails these people?'

*Martin.* 'I don't know.'

*Mag.* 'But what do you think ails them?'

*Martin.* 'I do not desire to spend my judgment upon it.'

*Mag.* 'Don't you think they are bewitched?'

*Martin.* 'No. I do not think they are.'

*Mag.* 'Tell us your thoughts about them, then.'

*Martin.* 'No, my thoughts are my own when they are in, but when they are out, they are another's. Their master —'

*Mag.* 'Their master! Who do you think is their master?'

*Martin.* 'If they be dealing in the black art, you may know as well as I.'

*Mag.* 'Well, what have you done towards this?'

*Martin.* 'Nothing at all.'

*Mag.* 'Why, 'tis you or your appearance.'

*Martin.* 'I can't help it.'

*Mag.* 'Is it not your master? How comes your appearance to hurt these?'

*Martin.* 'How do I know? He that appeared in the shape of Samuel, a glorified saint, may appear in any one's shape.'

One circumstance occurred that inflicted a deep and lasting stain upon the pure ermine of justice. The waves of popular fury made one clear breach over the judgment seat. The jury appointed to try Rebecca Nurse brought in a verdict of 'Not Guilty.' Immediately upon hearing it the malignant and fiendlike accusers uttered a loud outcry in open court! The judges were overcome by the general clamor and intimidated from the faithful discharge of their sacred duty. They expressed their dissatisfaction with the verdict. One of the judges declared his disapprobation with great vehemence, another said she should be indicted anew, and the Chief Justice intimated to the jury that they had overlooked one important piece of evi-

dence. It was this: during the trial, a woman named Hobbs, who had confessed herself a witch, was brought into court, and as she entered, the prisoner turned towards her and said, 'What! do you bring her? she is one of us.' The jury were thus prevailed upon to go out again: they soon returned, pronouncing the poor old woman 'Guilty.' After her conviction she addressed the following note to the judges.

'These presents do humbly shew to the honored court and jury, that I being informed that the jury brought me in guilty, upon my saying that goodwife Hobbs and her daughter were of our company; but I intended no otherways, than as they were prisoners with us, and therefore did then, and yet do judge them not legal evidence against their fellow prisoners. And I being something hard of hearing, and full of grief, none informing me how the court took up my words, and therefore had no opportunity to declare what I intended, when I said, they were of our company.

REBECCA NURSE.'

The governor had intended to grant her a reprieve but upon hearing of his intention

the accusers renewed their dismal outcries against her. Several gentlemen of Salem expostulated with the governor, and he was prevailed upon to give orders for her execution, which took place within a few weeks after her conviction.

The extraordinary conduct of these gentlemen, in preventing the exercise of the executive clemency and discretion on this occasion, is to be explained, it is probable by the following fact recorded by Dr Neal in his History of New England. There was an organized association or committee of private individuals in Salem, during the continuance of the delusion, who had undertaken and engaged to find out, and prosecute all suspected persons. Dr Neal also informs us that many were arrested and thrown into prison by their interference and influence. It is probable that the gentlemen who prevented the reprieve of Mrs Nurse, acted under the authority and by the direction of this association.

The chief justice, Lieutenant Governor Stoughton, seems to have been actuated

by a violent prejudice and remarkable zeal against the prisoners. The following instance is related by one of his friends and courtiers, Dr Cotton Mather, as illustrative of his adroitness in circumventing and ensnaring an accused individual, in the course of his examination; it cannot, however, but be regarded by all reflecting and humane persons, as an undignified interference and an unfeeling officiousness on the part of a presiding judge. — ‘It cost the court,’ says the reporter, ‘a wonderful deal of trouble to hear the testimonies of the sufferers; for when they were going to give in their depositions, they would for a long time be taken with fits, that made them incapable of saying anything. The chief judge asked the prisoner (Rev. Mr Burroughs,) “who he thought hindered these witnesses from giving their testimonies?” And he answered, “he supposed it was the devil;” that honorable person replied, “how comes the devil then to be so loath to have any testimony borne against you?” which cast him into very great confusion.’ The judge and all the people exulted no doubt exceedingly at the success

of the stratagem by which the poor prisoner had been thus entrapped and confounded.

Judge Stoughton does not appear to have recovered from the excitement, into which he was thrown against the supposed witches. He never could bear to hear any persons express regret or penitence for the part they had taken in the proceedings. When the public delusion had so far subsided, that it became difficult to procure the execution of a witch, he was disturbed and incensed to such a degree, that he abandoned his seat on the bench. During a session of the court at Charlestown, in January, 1692-3, 'word was brought in that a reprieve was sent to Salem, and had prevented the execution of seven of those that were there condemned; which so moved the chief judge that he said to this effect. "We were in a way to have cleared the land of them; who it is that obstructs the cause of justice, I know not; the Lord be merciful to the country;" and so went off the bench, and came no more into that court.'

The executive officers of the law partook of the same spirit. It has already beer

mentioned that Giles Cory seeing that a trial was a mere mockery, and that to put himself to the bar, was to offer himself to be murdered under the forms of law, refused to plead to the indictment. I find by the records of the first church, that some months before, this same Giles Cory, then eighty years of age, made a public profession of religion, acknowledged with penitence the sins of his life, and was admitted to the communion. In consequence of his refusing to plead, he was crushed to death. As his aged frame yielded to the dreadful pressure, his tongue was protruded from his mouth. The demon who presided over the torture, drove it back again with the point of his cane. The heart of man once turned to cruelty seems, like the fleshed tiger, to gather new fury in the mere exercise of ferocity.

We have seen that a physician gave the first impulse to the awful work, by pronouncing the opinion that the pretended sufferers were afflicted by the influence of witches. We have also seen that the judges and officers of the law did what they could to drive the delusion to its height. It ought not



in justice to be denied or concealed, that the clergy were also instrumental in promoting the proceedings. Nay, it must be acknowledged that they took the lead in the whole transaction. As the supposed agents of all the mischief belonged to the supernatural or spiritual world, which has ever been considered their peculiar province, it was thought that the assistance and cooperation of ministers were particularly appropriate and necessary.

It has been mentioned that the government consulted the ministers of Boston, and the vicinity, after the execution of the first person convicted, and previous to the trial of the others, and that they returned a positive and earnest recommendation to proceed in the good work.

Mr Noyes, at that time the junior pastor of the first church in Salem, was one of the most distinguished ministers of the age. There is no reason to doubt that he was justly described in his obituary, in the Boston newspaper, which concludes a glowing account of his eminent gifts and Christian

graces in the following terms — ‘It is no wonder that Salem, and the adjacent parts of the country, as also the churches, university and people of New England, justly esteem him as a principal part of their glory.’ It is my painful duty to hold up the conduct of this my predecessor to your pity and amazement; if I should fail to do so, I should prove false to one of the leading designs of these lectures, which, as has before been observed, is to show that there is power in a popular delusion and a general excitement of the passions of a community to pervert the best of characters, turn the hearts even of good men to violence, and fill them with all manner of bitterness.

Rebecca Nurse, the person whom the jury in the first instance acquitted, but were afterwards induced by the strong disapprobation and rebukes of the judges to condemn, was a member of the first church. On the communion day that intervened between her conviction and execution, Mr Noyes procured a vote of excommunication to be passed against her. In the afternoon of the same day, the poor old woman was

carried to the 'great and spacious meeting-house' in chains, and there in the presence of a vast assembly, Mr Noyes proclaimed her expulsion from the church, pronounced the sentence of eternal death upon her, formally delivered her over to Satan, and consigned her to the flames of hell. It is related, however, that as soon as the fanaticism had disappeared, the recollection of her excellent character, and virtuous and pious life, effaced the reproach of the spiritual as well as the temporal sentence.

I would mention in this connexion, that Martha Cory, the wife of Giles Cory, was a member of the church in Salem Village. A committee consisting of the pastor, the two deacons, and another member, was sent by the church to the prison, to promulgate to her a doom similar to that to which Rebecca Nurse was consigned, the day after her conviction. Mr Parris declares in the records of the church, that they found her 'very obdurate, justifying herself, and condemning all who had done anything to her just discovery or condemnation. Whereupon, after a little discourse (for,' says he,

‘her imperiousness would not suffer much) and after prayer (which she was willing to decline) the dreadful sentence of excommunication was pronounced against her.’

Mr Noyes was also very active to prevent a revulsion of the public mind, or even the least diminution of the popular violence against the supposed witches. As they all protested their innocence to the moment of death, and as most of them exhibited a remarkably Christian deportment throughout the dreadful scenes they were called to encounter from their arrest to their execution, there was reason to apprehend that the people would gradually be led to feel a sympathy for them, if not to entertain doubts of their guilt. It became necessary, therefore, to remove any impressions unfavorable to themselves, that might be made by the conduct and declarations of the convicts. Mr Noyes and others were on the ground continually for this purpose.

One of the most interesting persons among the innocent sufferers, was Mary Easty of Topsfield ; she was a sister of Rebecca Nurse. Her mind appears to have been uncommon-

ly strong and well cultivated, and her heart the abode of the purest and most Christian sentiments. After her conviction, she addressed the following letter to the judges and ministers, by which it appears, that she felt for others more than she did for herself. It is a striking and affecting specimen of good sense, of Christian fortitude, of pious humility, of noble benevolence, and of the real eloquence of the heart.

‘To the honorable judge and bench now sitting in judicature in Salem, and the reverend ministers, humbly sheweth,—That, whereas your humble and poor petitioner, being condemned to die, doth humbly beg of you to take it into your judicious and pious consideration, that your poor and humble petitioner, knowing my own innocency, (blessed be the Lord for it,) and seeing plainly the wiles and subtilty of my accusers, by myself, cannot but judge charitably of others, that are going the same way with myself, if the Lord step not mightily in. I was confined a whole month on the same account that I am now condemned, and then cleared by the afflicted persons, as some of

your honors know ; and in two days time, I was cried out upon by them again ; and have been confined and am now condemned to die. The Lord above knows my innocence then, and likewise doth now, as at the great day will be known by men and angels. I petition to your honors, not for my own life, for I know I must die, and my appointed time is set ; but the Lord he knows if it be possible that no more innocent blood be shed, which undoubtedly cannot be avoided in the way and course you go in. I question not but your honors do to the utmost of your powers, in the discovery and detecting of witchcraft and witches, and would not be guilty of innocent blood for the world ; but by my own innocency I know you are in the wrong way. The Lord in his infinite mercy direct you in this great work, if it be his blessed will, that innocent blood be not shed. I would humbly beg of you that your honors would be pleased to examine some of those confessing witches, I being confident there are several of them have belied themselves and others, as will appear, if not in this world, I am sure in the world

to come, whither I am going ; and I question not but yourselves will see an alteration in these things. They say, myself and others have made a league with the devil ; we cannot confess ; I know and the Lord knows (as will shortly appear) they belie me, and so I question not but they do others ; the Lord alone, who is the searcher of all hearts, knows, as I shall answer it at the tribunal seat, that I know not the least thing of witchcraft, therefore I cannot, I durst not belie my own soul. I beg your honors not to deny this my humble petition, from a poor, dying, innocent person, and I question not but the Lord will give a blessing to your endeavours.

MARY EASTY.'

The parting interview of this excellent woman with her husband, children and friends, is said to have been a most solemn, affecting and sublime scene. She was executed with seven others. Mr Noyes turned towards their bodies and exclaimed with a compassion, ' that was altogether worthy of an inquisitor, ' What a sad thing it is to see eight firebrands of hell hanging there !! '

John Proctor of Salem Village, went to court to attend his wife during her examination on the charge of witchcraft; and having rendered himself disagreeable to the prosecuting witnesses by the interest he naturally took in her behalf, was accused by them on the spot, of the same crime, condemned and executed. Both he and his wife sustained excellent characters in the village, and in Ipswich where they had formerly resided. He wrote the following spirited and interesting letter to the ministers of Boston, requesting to be tried there, and protesting against the proceedings of the court.

*‘ Salem Prison, July 23, 1692.*

*‘ Mr Mather, Mr Allen, Mr Moody, Mr Willard and Mr Bailly,*

*‘ REVEREND GENTLEMEN, — The innocence of our case, with the enmity of our accusers and our judges and jury, whom nothing but our innocent blood will serve, having condemned us already before our trials, being so much incensed and enraged against us by the Devil, makes us bold to beg and implore your favorable assistance of*



this our humble petition to his excellency, that if it be possible our innocent blood may be spared, which undoubtedly otherwise will be shed, if the Lord doth not mercifully step in ; the magistrates, ministers, juries, and all the people in general, being so much enraged and incensed against us by the delusion of the Devil, which we can term no other, by reason we know in our own consciences, we are all innocent persons. Here are five persons who have lately confessed themselves to be witches, and do accuse some of us of being along with them at a sacrament, since we were committed into close prison, which we know to be lies. Two of the five are (Carrier's sons) young men, who would not confess anything till they tied them neck and heels, till the blood was ready to come out of their noses ; and it is credibly believed and reported this was the occasion of making them confess what they never did, by reason, they said, one had been a witch a month, and another five weeks, and that their mother made them so, who has been confined here this nine weeks.

My son, William Proctor, when he was examined, because he would not confess that he was guilty, when he was innocent, they tied him neck and heels till the blood gushed out at his nose, and would have kept him so twentyfour hours, if one, more merciful than the rest, had not taken pity on him and caused him to be unbound.

‘These actions are very like the Popish cruelties. They have already undone us in our estates, and that will not serve their turns without our innocent blood. If it cannot be granted that we can have our trials at Boston, we humbly beg that you would endeavor to have these magistrates changed, and others in their room ; begging also and beseeching you that you would be pleased to be here, if not all, some of you, at our trials, hoping thereby you may be the means of saving the shedding of our innocent blood. Desiring your prayers to the Lord in our behalf, we rest your poor afflicted servants,  
JOHN PROCTOR, &c.’

When he was in prison, all his property was attached, everything was taken from his house, his family, consisting of eleven child-

ren, were left destitute, even the food that was preparing for their dinner, was carried away by the sheriff. After conviction he petitioned for a little more time to prepare to die, but it was denied him. He begged Mr Noyes to pray with him, but he refused, unless he would confess that he was guilty! His numerous family was not permitted to starve. The cruelty that snatched the bread from their mouths was overruled by a merciful providence. His descendants, who are found in all parts of the country, occupy at this moment the estate, and cultivate the fields which he owned.\*

The prosecutors were exceedingly anxious to obtain confessions from the convicted, and importuned, harassed and vexed them continually to acknowledge their guilt. The public were predisposed to suspect and convict of witchcraft all persons in whose character and conduct, there were any marks of eccentricity or traits of peculiarity. Sarah Good had for some time previous to the de-

\* The following were the names of his children, John, Benjamin, Elizabeth, Martha, Mary, William, Joseph, Samuel, Thorndike, Sarah and Abigail.

lusion, been subject to a species of mental derangement, of which sadness and melancholy were the prevailing characteristics. She was accordingly accused of witchcraft and condemned to die. Mr Noyes urged her very strenuously, at the time of her execution, to confess. Among other things he told her, 'She was a witch, and that she knew she was a witch.' She was conscious of her innocence, and felt that she was injured, oppressed and trampled upon, and her indignation was roused against her persecutors. She could not bear in silence the cruel aspersion, and although she was just about to be launched into eternity, the torrent of her feelings could not be restrained, but burst upon the head of him who uttered the false accusation. 'You are a liar,' said she. 'I am no more a witch, than you are a wizard;—and if you take away my life, God will give you blood to drink.' Hutchinson says that in his day there was a tradition among the people of Salem, and it has descended to the present time, that the manner of Mr Noyes' death strangely verified the predic-

tion thus wrung from the incensed spirit of the dying old woman.

I have before related the circumstances connected with the confession and recantation of Margaret Jacobs, the poor girl who was persuaded to be instrumental in procuring the conviction of her grandfather ; it was also remarked that she had been a witness against the Rev. Mr Burroughs. She obtained permission to visit him the day before his execution, acknowledged that she had belied him, and implored his forgiveness. He freely forgave her, and prayed with her and for her.

The case of Mr Burroughs is connected with circumstances of uncommon interest. He had enjoyed the benefit of a liberal education ; you will find his name among those who received the honors of Harvard University in the year 1670. At the time of his arrest, he was the minister of a congregation in Wells, a town in the state of Maine. He had passed the prime of life, and, as there is reason to fear, fell a victim to the prejudice and hatred engendered in a parochial

controversy some years before. He was carried in a cart with other convicts from the jail, which is supposed to have stood on the northern corner of County and St Peter's Streets, the procession probably passing down St Peter's into Essex Street, and thence onward to the rocky elevation, called 'Gallows hill,' about an eighth of a mile towards Danvers, beyond the head of Federal Street, where the executions took place. 'While Mr Burroughs was on the ladder,' a contemporary writer observes, 'he made a speech for the clearing of his innocence, with such solemn and serious expressions as were to the admiration of all present; his prayer was so well worded and uttered with such composedness and such fervency of spirit, as was very affecting, and drew tears from many, so that it seemed to some that the spectators would hinder the execution.' To meet and turn back this state of feeling, the accusers cried out, that they saw the evil being standing behind him in the shape of a black man, and dictating every word he uttered. And the famous Cotton Mather, minister of the North Church in Boston,

who was declared by Dr Colman to have been the most learned man he ever knew, and who combined an almost incredible amount of vanity and credulity, with a high degree of cunning and policy ; an inordinate love of temporal power and distinction, with every outward manifestation of piety and Christian humility ; and a proneness to fanaticism and superstition with amazing acquisitions of knowledge, and a great and remarkable genius, rode round in the crowd on horseback, haranguing the people, and saying that it was not to be wondered at, that Mr Burroughs appeared so well, for that the devil often transformed himself into an angel of light ! This artful declamation, together with the outcries and assertions of the accusers, had the intended effect upon the fanatical multitude.] When the body was cut down it was dragged by the rope to a hollow place, excavated between the rocks, stripped of its garments, and then covered with clothes that had belonged to some poor wretch previously executed, thrown with two others into the hole,

trampled down by the mob, and finally left partly uncovered.

I have now concluded the narrative of the Salem witchcraft. It has been my object to present only those facts that were necessary to give you a correct and adequate view of the transaction, and to enable you to bear away from the contemplation of the dreadful scene, such impressions and reflections as historical and philosophical truth and justice require. It has been my determination to set down nought in malice, and to keep back nothing from partiality.

I might proceed to analyze the whole transaction, into the several elementary passions, motives, and intentions, by whose combined, conflicting, or separate influence it was introduced and carried on to its dreadful results. There is much reason to fear that to a great extent it was the effect of deliberate design. The peculiar theology of that period presented inducements to ambitious and enthusiastic individuals among the prominent members of the clergy, to bring about a state of things in which their spiritual power would be felt and displayed to a



greater extent than before. The frequently repeated wars with the Indians, especially the struggle with the celebrated and heroic Phillip, had produced a relaxed and licentious state of morals and manners among the people. This appears with sufficient clearness from the doings and declarations of the Reforming Synod convened at Boston in 1679. All patriotic, pious and benevolent citizens were distressed at the contemplation of such a state of things, and many attempts were made to arrest the downward movement of society. It was thought that the only way in which to check it was to restore and increase the influence of the clergy, that through them the community at large might be brought more under the sway of moral and christian obligation. The whole machinery of a religious reformation, so far as the methods for producing such an effect had then been discovered, were put into operation simultaneously and on a large scale.

In the year 1692, special efforts were made to renew the power of the spirit of the

gospel in many of the churches. The motives of those who acted in these measures were for the most part of the purest and holiest character. But there were not wanting individuals who were willing to abuse the opportunities offered by the general excitement and awakening thus produced. It was soon discerned by those ambitious of spiritual influence and domination, that their object could be most easily achieved by carrying the people to the greatest extreme of credulity, fanaticism, and superstition.

Opposition to prevailing vices, and attempts to reform society, were considered at that time in the light of a conflict with Satan himself, and he was thought to be the ablest minister who had the greatest power over the great enemy, who could most easily and effectually avert his blows and counteract his baleful influence. Dr Cotton Mather aspired to be considered the great champion of the church, and the most successful combatant against the prince of the power of the air. He seems to have longed for an opportunity to signalize himself in this particular

kind of warfare ; seized upon every occurrence that would admit of such a coloring to represent it as the result of diabolical agency ; circulated in his numerous publications as many tales of witchcraft as he could collect throughout New and Old England, and repeatedly endeavored to get up a delusion of this kind in Boston. He succeeded to some extent. An instance of witchcraft was brought about in that place by his management in 1688. There is some ground for suspicion that he was instrumental in causing the delusion in Salem ; at any rate, he took a leading part in conducting it. And while there is evidence that he endeavored, after the delusion subsided, to escape the disgrace of having approved of the proceedings, and pretended to have been in some measure opposed to them, it can be too clearly shown that he was secretly and cunningly endeavoring to renew them during the next year in his own parish in Boston.] I know nothing more artful and jesuitical than his attempts, to avoid the reproach of having been active in carrying on the delusion in Salem,

and elsewhere, and, at the same time, to keep up such a degree of credulity and superstition in the minds of the people, as to render it easy to plunge them into it again at the first favorable moment. In the following passages he endeavors to escape the odium that had been connected with the prosecutions.

‘The world knows how many pages I have composed and published, and particular gentlemen in the government know how many letters I have written to prevent the excessive credit of spectral accusations.

‘In short, I do humbly but freely affirm it, that there is not a man living in this world who has been more desirous than the poor man I, to shelter my neighbors from the inconveniences of spectral outcries: yea, I am very jealous I have done so much that way, as to sin in what I have done; such have been the cowardice and fearfulness, whereunto my regard unto the dissatisfaction of other people has precipitated me. I know a man in the world, who has thought he has been able to convict some such witches as

ought to die ; but his respect unto the public peace has caused him rather to try whether he could not renew them by repentance.'

In Dr Mather's life of Sir William Phipps, a man of an exceedingly feeble intellect, and whom he appears to have kept by flattery in complete subserviency to his purposes, he artfully endeavors to take the credit to himself of having doubted the propriety of the proceedings while they were in progress. This work was published without his name, in order that he might commend himself with more freedom. The advice given by the ministers of Boston and the vicinity to the government, has been spoken of already more than once. Cotton Mather frequently took occasion to commend, and magnify the merit of this production. In one of his writings he speaks of 'the gracious words' it contained. In his life of Phipps, he thus modestly takes the credit of its authorship to himself; it was 'drawn up at their (the ministers') desire, by Mr Mather the younger, as I have been informed.' And in order

the more effectually to give the impression that he was rather opposed to the proceedings, he quotes those portions of the paper that recommended caution and circumspection, leaving out those other passages, in which it was vehemently urged to carry the proceedings on — ‘speedily and vigorously.’!

But like other ambitious and grasping politicians, he was anxious to have the support of all parties at the same time. After making court to those who were dissatisfied with the prosecutions, he thus commends himself to all who approved of them.

‘And why, after all my unwearied cares and pains to rescue the miserable from the lions and bears of hell, which had seized them, and after all my studies to disappoint the devils in their designs to confound my neighborhood, must I be driven to the necessity of an apology? Truly the hard representations wherewith some ill men have reviled my conduct, and the countenance which other men have given to these representations, oblige me to give mankind some account of my behaviour. No christian can

(I say none but evil workers can) criminate my visiting such of my poor flock, as have at any time fallen under the terrible and sensible molestations of evil angels: let their afflictions have been what they will, I could not have answered it unto my glorious Lord, if I had withheld my just comforts and counsels from them; and if I have also, with some exactness, observed the methods of the invisible world, when they have thus become observable, I have been but a servant of mankind in doing so: yea, no less a person than the venerable Baxter has more than once or twice in the most public manner invited mankind to thank me for that service.'

In other passages, he thus continues to stimulate and encourage the advocates of the prosecutions.

'Wherefore, instead of all apish shouts and jeers at histories which have such undoubted confirmation, as that no man that has breeding enough to regard the common laws of human society will offer to doubt of them; it becomes us rather to adore the goodness of God, who does not permit such

things every day to befall us all, as he sometimes did permit to befall some few of our miserable neighbors.

‘ And is it a very glorious thing that I have now to mention : The devils have with most horrid operations, broke in upon our neighborhood, and God has at such a rate overruled all the fury and malice of those devils, that all the afflicted have not only been delivered, but I hope also savingly brought home unto God, and the reputation of no one good person in the world has been damaged ; but instead thereof, the souls of many, especially of the rising generation, have been thereby awakened unto some acquaintance with religion ; our young people, who belonged unto the praying meetings, of both sexes, apart, would ordinarily spend whole nights, by whole weeks together, in prayers and psalms upon these occasions, in which devotions the devils could get nothing, but, like fools, a scourge for their own backs ; and some scores of other young people, who were strangers to real piety, were now struck with the lively demonstrations of hell



evidently set forth before their eyes, when they saw persons cruelly frightened, wounded and starved by devils, and scalded with burning brimstone ; and yet so preserved in this tortured state, as that, at the end of one month's wretchedness, they were as able still to undergo another ; so that of these also, it might now be said — “ Behold they pray.” In the whole the devil got just nothing, but God got praises, Christ got subjects, the Holy Spirit got temples, the Church got additions, and the souls of men got everlasting benefits. I am not so vain as to say that any wisdom or virtue of mine did contribute unto this good order of things ; but I am so just as to say, I did not hinder this good.’

From this latter passage it is clear that Dr Mather contemplated the witchcraft delusion as having been the instrument in promoting a revival of religion, and was inclined to boast of the success with which it had been attended as such.

I cannot, indeed, resist the conviction, that, notwithstanding all his attempts to ap-

pear dissatisfied, after they had become unpopular, with the occurrences in the Salem trials, he looked upon them with secret pleasure, and would have been glad to have had them repeated again in Boston.

How blind is man to the future! The state of things which Cotton Mather labored to bring about, in order that he might increase his own influence over an infatuated people, by being regarded by them as mighty to cast out and vanquish evil spirits, and as able to hold Satan himself in chains by his prayers and his piety, brought him at length into such disgrace, that his power was broken down, and he became the object of public ridicule and open insult. And the excitement that had been produced for the purpose of restoring and strengthening the influence of the clerical and spiritual leaders resulted in effects which reduced that influence to a still lower point. The intimate connexion of Dr Mather and other prominent ministers with the witchcraft delusion, brought a reproach upon the clergy from which they have never yet recovered.

In addition to the designing exertions of ambitious ecclesiastics, and the benevolent and praiseworthy efforts of those whose only aim was to promote a real and thorough reformation of religion, all the passions of our nature stood ready to throw their concentrated energy into the excitement, (as they ever will do whatever may be its character,) so soon as it became sufficiently strong to encourage their action.

The whole force of popular superstition, all the fanatical propensities of the ignorant and deluded multitude united with the best feelings of our nature to heighten the fury of the storm. Piety was indignant at the supposed rebellion against the sovereignty of God, and was roused to an extreme of agitation and apprehension, in witnessing such a daring and fierce assault by the devil and his adherents upon the churches and the cause of the gospel. Virtue was shocked at the tremendous guilt of those who were believed to have entered the diabolical confederacy ; while public order and security stood aghast, amidst the invisible, the super-

natural, the infernal, and, apparently, the irresistible attacks that were making upon the foundations of society. In baleful combination with principles, good in themselves, thus urging the passions into wild operation, there were all the wicked and violent affections to which humanity is liable. Theological bitterness, personal animosities, local controversies, private feuds, long cherished grudges, and professional jealousies, rushed forward, and raised their discordant voices, to swell the horrible din; credulity rose with its monstrous and ever expanding form, on the ruins of truth, reason and the senses; malignity and cruelty rode triumphant through the storm, by whose fury every mild and gentle sentiment had been shipwrecked; and revenge, smiling in the midst of the tempest, welcomed its desolating wrath as it dashed the mangled objects of its hate along the shore.

It would indeed be worthy the attention of the metaphysician and moralist, to scrutinize this transaction thoroughly in all its periods and branches, to ascertain its causes

and to mark its developments. There cannot be a doubt that much valuable instruction would thus be gathered respecting the elements of our nature, and of society. But this is a study which can best be pursued by each individual observer for himself. I relinquish it therefore to the calm consideration and sober reflection of every one who has followed me in the examination and review now brought to a close.

Perhaps you are ready to exclaim that your ancestors were at once, the greatest fanatics, and the greatest barbarians the world ever knew; that they have left a darker stain upon our annals than is to be found elsewhere on all the records of history. And that, instead of being proud of such forefathers, you would rather have been the descendants of any other people. It shall be the purpose of the remaining lecture to show the unreasonableness of such exclamations. By giving a history of similar superstitious delusions and proceedings in other countries, by tracing the progress and describing the state of legislation respecting witchcraft,

and by presenting a sketch of the condition of science, theology and philosophy at the time, I shall hope to do this.

It shall also be my purpose to lead your minds into such a train of reflections, as will enable you to draw the lesson it was intended by providence to convey from this sad history ; to educe from it important illustrations and suggestions respecting our moral and intellectual nature ; to cause light to shine forth from its dark folds and beam upon our path, and to confirm us in a grateful sense of the blessings we enjoy, in the possession of enlightened reason, in the clearer revelation of truth, and in the discoveries of science.

Partly, however, from an unwillingness to have your minds continue for a day under the impression that must now rest upon them respecting your ancestors, and partly to prepare you for the considerations, in justification, or rather in palliation, of their conduct, to be presented in the remaining lecture, I must exercise your patience for a moment longer.

Human virtue never shines with more lustre, than when it rises amidst the imperfections, or from the ruins of our nature, arrays itself in the robes of penitence, and goes forth with earnest and humble sincerity to the work of reformation and restitution. It is the sight of such virtue, we are assured by him who dwells in the bosom of God, that imparts the sublimest joy and raises the loudest strains of thanksgiving in the choirs of heaven. Such virtue did our pious ancestors exhibit when the spell that had bound and perverted them was broken.

The government, all its branches acting in concert, issued a proclamation, enjoining a general Fast, and the people were called upon in the following affecting expressions to unite in prayer to God.

‘By the honorable the Lieutenant Governor, Council and Assembly of his Majesty’s province of the Massachusetts Bay, in General Court assembled.

‘Whereas the anger of God is not yet turned away, but his hand is still stretched out against his people in manifold judgments,

particularly in drawing out to such a length the troubles of Europe, by a perplexing war ; and more especially respecting ourselves in this province, in that God is pleased still to go on in diminishing our substance, cutting short our harvest, blasting our most promising undertakings more ways than one, unsettling us, and by his more immediate hand snatching away many out of our embraces by sudden and violent deaths, even at this time, when the sword is devouring so many both at home and abroad, and that after many days of public and solemn addressing him ; and although, considering the many sins prevailing in the midst of us, we cannot but wonder at the patience and mercy moderating these rebukes ; yet we cannot but also fear, that there is something still wanting to accompany our supplications : and doubtless there are some particular sins, which God is angry with our Israel for, that have not been duly seen and resented by us, about which God expects to be sought, if ever he again turn our captivity.



‘ Wherefore it is commanded and appointed, that Thursday, the fourteenth of January next, be observed as a day of prayer with fasting, throughout this province, strictly forbidding all servile labor thereon ; that so all God’s people may offer up fervent supplications unto him, for the preservation and prosperity of his Majesty’s royal person and government, and success to attend his affairs both at home and abroad ; that all iniquity may be put away, which hath stirred God’s holy jealousy against this land ; that he would show us what we know not, and help us wherein we have done amiss to do so no more ; and especially that whatever mistakes on either hand, have been fallen into, either by the body of this people, or any orders of men, referring to the late tragedy, raised among us by Satan and his instruments, through the awful judgment of God, he would humble us therefor, and pardon all the errors of his servants and people, that desire to love his name ; that he would remove the rod of the wicked from off the lot of the righteous, that he would bring in the

American heathen, and cause them to hear and obey his voice.

‘Given at Boston, December 17th, 1696, in the eighth year of his Majesty’s reign.

‘ISAAC ADDINGTON, *Secretary.*’

It seems as if the community could not recover from a sense of the injury it had inflicted upon the innocent. I find that a resolution was introduced into the General Court, nearly fifty years afterwards, by Major Sewall, a son of the Judge, for the appointment of a committee to make an inquiry into the condition and circumstances of individuals and families, that might have suffered from the ‘calamity of 1692,’ as it was called. The resolution was passed unanimously and the house expressed a strong desire to compensate them either by money or a township of land.

The inhabitants of Salem did what they could in the way of restitution and reparation. Dr Bentley, who has given the most lively and interesting account of the delusion, of any I have seen, says, ‘that Mr Noyes came out and publicly confessed his error ; never

concealed a circumstance ; never excused himself ; visited, loved, blessed the survivors whom he had injured ; asked forgiveness always, and consecrated the residue of his life to bless mankind.'

The first Church, which had anathematized Rebecca Nurse and others, after their conviction and previous to their execution, did all that could be done by way of reparation. It endeavored to erase the ignominy it had cast upon them, by publicly repealing and reversing its censures, and by recording the following affecting acknowledgment of its error.

' *March 2d, 1712.* — After the Sacrament a church meeting was appointed to be at the Teacher's house, at two o'clock in the afternoon, on the sixth of the month, being Thursday ; on which day accordingly, March sixth, they met to consider of the several particulars propounded to them by the Teacher : — viz. 1st, Whether the record of the excommunication of our sister Nurse, (all things considered,) may not be erased and blotted out. The result of which con-

sideration was — That whereas on the third of July, 1692, it was proposed by the elders, and consented to by a unanimous vote of the church, that our sister Nurse should be excommunicated, she being convicted of witchcraft by the court — and she was accordingly excommunicated. Since which the General Court having taken off the attainder, and the testimony on which she was convicted, being not now so satisfactory to ourselves and others, as it was generally in that hour of darkness and temptation, and we being solicited by her son, Mr Samuel Nurse, to erase and blot out of the church records the sentence of her excommunication — this church having the matter proposed to them by the Teacher, and having seriously considered it, doth consent that the record of our sister Nurse's excommunication be accordingly erased and blotted out, that it may no longer be a reproach to her memory, and an occasion of grief to her children. Humbly requesting that the merciful God would pardon whatsoever sin, error or mistake was in the application of that censure, and of that

whole affair, through our merciful High Priest, who knoweth how to have compassion on the ignorant, and those that are out of the way.'

A similar step was taken in reference to Giles Cory. The same course was pursued, as appears from its records, by the church in Salem Village, with reference to the excommunication of Martha Cory. The records of that church contain a most touching and pungent declaration of sorrow and repentance, made thirteen years afterwards, by Ann Putnam, already mentioned as one of the principal accusers. We have reason to cherish the belief that the unhappy and truly penitent young woman was under the influence, at the time of the prosecutions, of a sincere and complete delusion, without any consciousness or suspicion of error, or the least inclination to injure the innocent.

It is probable that reflecting persons would agree that the jury had acted in conformity with their obligations in convicting the persons accused. They had sworn to try them according to the law and the evidence. The

law was certain ; it was laid down with great positiveness by the court, and not disputed by the prisoners or their friends. The jury were bound to take and weigh the evidence that was admitted, and to their minds, it was clear, decisive and overwhelming, offered by persons of good character, and confirmed by a great number of confessions. If it had been within their province, as it is always declared not to be, to discuss the general principles, and sit in judgment on the particular penalties of law, it would not have altered the case, for at that time not only the common people but the wisest philosophers supported the interpretation of the law that acknowledged the existence of witchcraft, and its sanction that visited it with death.

Notwithstanding all this, however, so tender and sensitive were the consciences of the jurors that they signed and circulated the following humble and solemn declaration of regret for the part they had borne in the trials. As the publication of this paper was highly honorable to those who signed it, and cannot but be contemplated with satisfaction

by all their descendants, I will repeat their names.

‘ We whose names are underwritten, being in the year 1692 called to serve as jurors in court at Salem, on trial of many who were by some suspected guilty of doing acts of witchcraft upon the bodies of sundry persons ;— We confess that we ourselves were not capable to understand, nor able to withstand, the mysterious delusions of the powers of darkness, and prince of the air ; but were for want of knowledge in ourselves, and better information from others, prevailed with to take up with such evidence against the accused, as, on further consideration and better information, we justly fear was insufficient for the touching the lives of any, (Deut. xvii. 6,) whereby we fear, we have been instrumental, with others, though ignorantly and unwittingly, to bring upon ourselves and this people of the Lord, the guilt of innocent blood ; which sin, the Lord saith in scripture, he would not pardon, (2 Kings, xxiv. 4,) that is, we suppose, in regard of his temporal judgments. We do,

therefore, hereby signify to all in general, (and to the surviving sufferers in special) our deep sense of, and sorrow for, our errors, in acting on such evidence to the condemning of any person ; and do hereby declare, that we justly fear that we were sadly deluded and mistaken ; for which we are much disquieted and distressed in our minds ; and do therefore humbly beg forgiveness, first of God, for Christ's sake, for this our error ; and pray that God would not impute the guilt of it, to ourselves, nor others ; and we also pray that we may be considered candidly, and aright by the living sufferers, as being then under the power of a strong and general delusion, utterly unacquainted with, and not experienced in matters of that nature.

‘ We do heartily ask forgiveness of you all, whom we have justly offended ; and do declare, according to our present minds, we would none of us do such things again, on such grounds, for the whole world ; praying you to accept of this, in way of satisfaction for our offence, and that you would bless



the inheritance of the Lord, that he may be entreated for the land—

<i>'Foreman,</i> Thomas Fisk,	Thomas Pearly, Sen.
William Fisk,	John Peabody,
John Bachelor,	Thomas Perkins,
Thos. Fisk, Jun.	Samuel Sayer,
John Dane,	Andrew Eliot,
Joseph Evelith,	H. Herrick, Sen.'

The conduct of Judge Sewall claims our particular admiration. He observed annually in private a day of humiliation and prayer, during the remainder of his life, to keep fresh in his mind a sense of repentance and sorrow for the part he bore in the trials. On the day of the general fast, he rose in the place where he was accustomed to worship, the Old South in Boston, and in the presence of the great assembly, handed up to the pulpit a written confession, acknowledging the error into which he had been led, praying for the forgiveness of God and his people, and concluding with a request to all the congregation to unite with him in devout supplication, that it might not bring down the displeasure of the Most High, upon his country, his family, or himself. He re-

mained standing during the public reading of the paper.

The following passage is found in his diary under the date of April 23d, 1720, nearly thirty years afterwards. It was suggested by the perusal of Neal's History of New England. 'In Dr Neal's History of N. E. its nakedness is laid open in the businesses of the Quakers, Ana-baptists, Witchcraft. The Judges names are mentioned p. 502, my confession p. 536, vol. 2. The good and gracious God be pleased to save New England and me, and my family.'

There never was a more striking and complete fulfilment of the apostolic assurance, that the prayer of a righteous man availeth much, than in this instance. God has been pleased in a remarkable manner to save and bless New England. The favor of heaven was bestowed upon Judge Sewall during the remainder of his life. He presided for many years on the very bench where he committed the error so sincerely deplored by him, and was regarded by all as a benefactor, an ornament and a blessing to his

generation ; while his family have enjoyed to a high degree the protection of Providence from that day to this, they have adorned every profession, and every department of society ; they have occupied the most elevated stations, have graced in successive generations the same lofty seat their ancestors occupied, have been the objects of the confidence, respect and love of their fellow citizens, and in this vicinity, their name is associated with all that is excellent in the memory of the past, and the observation of the present.

Your thoughts, my friends, have been led in the course of this lecture, through scenes of the most distressing and revolting character. I leave before your imaginations one that is bright with all the beauty of christian virtue. In the picture that exhibits Judge Sewall standing forth in the house of his God and in the presence of his fellow-worshippers, making a public declaration of his sorrow and regret for the mistaken judgment he had co-operated with others in pronouncing, and praying that it might be

forgiven — that it might not be followed by evil consequences to himself, his family or his country ; in this picture you have a representation of a truly great and magnanimous spirit, a spirit to which the divine influence of our religion had given an expansion and a lustre, that Roman or Grecian virtue never knew ; a spirit that had achieved a greater victory than warrior ever won, a victory over itself ; a spirit so noble and so pure that it felt no shame in acknowledging an error, and no humiliation in atoning for an injury. . If the contemplation of this bright example shall have imparted a glow of emulation to your hearts, your patience in listening, I am sure, will not go unrewarded.

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## LECTURE II.

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THE conduct of our ancestors in the proceedings connected with the Salem witchcraft delusion of 1692, cannot be justly understood or equitably estimated, without considering it in reference to the history and state of opinions respecting supposed compacts with supernatural beings, to the law of the land relating to witchcraft, to the condition of science, philosophy and theology at the time, and to the general principles of human nature and human society. As it was for the purpose of imparting to the members of this association a clear, adequate and fair view of the transaction, that my choice was originally directed to this subject, I shall

forthwith proceed to the discussion of these several topics so far as is necessary to the fulfilment of my design.

No person who looks about him on the scene in which he is placed, who reflects upon the infinite wonders of creation, and who contemplates the human mind, can be at a loss respecting the sources and causes of superstition. Let him transport himself back to the condition of a primitive and unlettered people, before whom the world appears in all its original and sublime mystery. Science has not lifted to their eyes the curtain behind which the secret operations of nature are carried on. They observe the tides rise and fall, but know not the attractive law that regulates their movements. They contemplate the procession of the seasons, without any conception of the principles and causes that determine and produce their changes. They witness the storm as it rises, in its wrath ; they listen with awe to the thunder peal, and gaze with startling terror upon the lightning as it flashes from within the bosom of the black

cloud, and are utterly ignorant to what power to attribute the dreadful phenomena. They look upward to the face of the sky, and see the myriad starry hosts that glitter there, and all is to them a mighty maze of dazzling confusion. It is for their fancy to explain, interpret and fill up the brilliant and magnificent scene.

The imagination was the faculty, the exercise of which was chiefly called for in such a state as this. Before science had traced the operations, and unfolded the secrets of nature, man was living in a world full of wonder and mystery. His curiosity was attracted to every object within the reach of his senses, and in the absence of knowledge, it was imagination alone that could make answer to its inquiries. It is natural to suppose that he would be led to attribute all the movements and operations of the external world which did not appear to be occasioned by the exercise of his own power, or the power of any other animal, to the agency of supernatural beings. His belief would not be likely, we may also conclude, to fix

upon the notion of a single overruling being. Although revelation and science have disclosed to us a beautiful and entire unity and harmony in the creation, it is probable that the phenomena of the external world would impress the unenlightened and unphilosophic observer with the belief that there was a diversity in the powers that caused them. He would imagine the agency of a being of an amiable and beneficent spirit in the bright sunshine, the fresh breeze, and the mild moonlight; and his fancy would suggest to his fears that a dark, severe and terrible being was in the ascendant during a day overshadowed by frowning clouds, or a night black with the storm and torn by the tempest.

By the aid of such reflections as these, we are easily conducted to a satisfactory and sufficient explanation of the origin of the mythology and fabulous superstitions of all ancient and primitive nations. From this the progress is plain, obvious and immediate to the pretensions of magicians, diviners, sorcerers, conjurors, oracles, sooth-



sayers, augurs, and the whole catalogue of those persons who professed to hold intercourse with the higher and spiritual powers. There are three classes into which they may be divided.

There were those, who, to acquire an influence over the people, pretended to possess the confidence, and enjoy the friendship and counsel of some one or more deities. Such was Numa, the early lawgiver of the Roman State. In order to induce the people to adopt the regulations and institutions, and religious rites he proposed, he made them believe that he had access to a divinity, and received all his plans and ideas as a communication from on high.

Persons who, in consequence of their superior acquirements, were enabled to excel others in any pursuit, or who could foresee and avail themselves of events in the natural world, were liable, without any intention to deceive, to be classed under some of these denominations. For instance, a Roman farmer, Furius Cresinus, surpassed all his neighbors, in the skill and success with

which he managed his agricultural affairs. He was accordingly accused of using magic arts in the operations of his farm. So far were his neighbors carried by their feelings of envy and jealousy, that they explained the fact of his being able to derive more produce from a small lot of land than they could from large ones, by charging him with attracting and drawing off the productions of their fields into his own by the employment of certain mysterious charms. For his defence, as we are informed by Pliny, he produced his strong and well constructed ploughs, his light and convenient spades, and his sun-burnt daughters, and pointing to them exclaimed: — Here are my charms; this is my magic; ‘these only are the witchcraft I have used.’ Zoroaster, the great philosopher and astronomer of the ancient East, was charged with divination and magic, merely, it is probable, because he possessed uncommon acquirements.

There were persons who had acquired an extraordinary amount of natural knowledge, and, for the sake of being regarded with won-

der and awe by the people, pretended to obtain their superior endowments from supernatural beings. They affected the name and character of sorcerers, diviners and soothsayers. It is easy to conceive of the early existence, and the great influence of such impostors. Patient observation, and often mere accident would suggest discoveries of the existence and operation of natural causes in producing phenomena before ascribed to superhuman agency. The knowledge thus acquired would be cautiously concealed, and cunningly used, to create astonishment and win admiration. Its fortunate possessors were enabled to secure the confidence, obedience, and even reverence of the benighted and deceived people.

Let us suppose, for instance, that some person belonging to an ignorant and superstitious tribe, had received information through the channel of secret tradition, or had ascertained by a lucky conjecture, or by profound reflection and calculation, the very minute, or hour, or day, within which a solar eclipse would take place. How easy

would it be for that person to induce the whole community to believe him to be in secret connexion with the higher powers, and to enjoy the confidential intercourse of the deities who rule the world. Let us suppose that he gives out word in an oracular and mysterious manner, that in consequence of the unwillingness of the people to receive law from him as from their rightful sovereign, or their true prophet and priest, his friends and protectors, the higher powers, would, at a specified time, withdraw the light of the sun and leave them to dwell in a world of eternal night, or dissolve the system of the universe. His threat might not at first be regarded; perhaps it would be laughed to scorn. Many, however, would be in suspense, and wait in anxious doubt the approach of the day that was to determine its truth. On that day the sun would rise as bright, perhaps brighter, than usual, it would mount through a clear sky with undiminished and glowing radiance up toward the highest heaven. The whole people would watch its course with solicitous attention, and as it

moved on steadily and triumphantly in its accustomed path, the belief that the prediction was about to prove false would gain strength in their minds. The pretended prophet would pass round among them with a calm complacency of demeanor that indicated entire confidence, and a feeling of satisfaction in the doom that was about to fall upon those who had denied his authority, derided his pretensions, and scorned his power.

Soon, however, a change would begin to be discerned in the atmosphere, the gazers would exclaim, that the sun was dissolving, that its disk was breaking and its whole face disappearing from the heavens. The terror and awe of the people would spread and deepen in every direction. The sun's rays would fall pale, feeble and dim upon the earth; a tint of mingled blue and yellow would be spread over the fading, sickening dying world; the darkness of a night, even more awful than that which closed the primal day of the first parents of the human family, would gradually settle upon the earth,

and the stars would begin to beam in the sunless sky.

The whole population, confounded, terrified, and driven to distraction, would rush in penitence and despair to the presence of their prophet; they would supplicate his forgiveness for their rebellious disregard of his authority and warnings, and would promise to honor, serve, revere and obey him forever, if he would use his influence with the higher powers, to procure their pardon, and to stay the progress of the dissolution and ruin that were coming upon the world. The dignified and apparently displeased impostor, after much affected reluctance, listens to their request, mutters forth some unintelligible sounds, goes through a solemn ceremony, looks up on high, waves his hand, and promises, upon the condition that they will acknowledge the divinity of his mission and yield entire obedience to him, that the sun shall be restored in the heavens.\* The grateful multitude await the fulfilment of the promise; and soon their eyes behold the glorious luminary reappearing, the light of

day is again diffused abroad, and the world goes on in its usual course. In this manner was the confidence of the people secured and abused.

The ingenuity of Columbus in availing himself of his knowledge of an approaching eclipse of the moon to strike awe into the minds of the American savages, suggests itself as an illustration of the probability and naturalness of the scene just supposed.

Every one, indeed, who could discover a secret of nature, and keep it secret, was able to impose himself upon the world as being allied with supernatural powers. Hence arose the whole host of diviners, astrologers, soothsayers, and oracles. After having once acquired possession of the credulous faith of the people, they could impose upon them almost without limit.

Those who pretended to hold this kind of intercourse with divinity, became as a natural consequence, the priests of the nation, constituted a distinct and regular profession, and perpetuated their body by the admission of new members, to whom they explained

all their arts, and communicated all their knowledge. While they were continually discovering and applying the secret principles and laws of nature, and the people were kept in utter ignorance and darkness, it is no wonder that they reached a great and unparalleled degree of power over the mass of the population. In this manner we account for the origin, and trace the history of the Chaldean priests in Assyria, the Brahmins of India, the Magi of Persia, the Oracles of Greece, the Augurs of Italy, the Druids of Britain, and the Powaws, Prophets or 'Medicins' as they sometimes called them, among our Indians.

The progress of the Christian religion has overthrown the power of these impostors in all civilized countries, and we can only here and there discern the vestiges and remnants of them, in wandering jugglers, ventriloquists, and fortune tellers.

It is probable that the witches mentioned in the Scriptures were of this description. Neither in sacred nor profane ancient history do we find what was understood in the days



of our ancestors by witchcraft, which, as has been mentioned in the previous lecture, meant a formal and actual compact with the great prince of evil beings. The sorcery of antiquity consisted in pretending to possess certain mysterious charms, and to do by their means, or by the cooperation of superhuman spirits, without any reference to their character as evil or good beings, what transcends the action of mere natural powers.

The witch of Endor, for instance, was a conjurer and necromancer, rather than a witch. By referring to the xxviii chap. 1 Samuel, where the interview between her and Saul is related, you will find that there is no ground for the opinion that the being from whom she pretended to receive her mysterious power was Satan, and if it was not Satan, of course she was not a witch. Saul, as the ruler of a people, who enjoyed the peculiar and exclusive government and protection of the true God, had forbidden, under the sanction of the highest penalties, the exercise of the arts of divination and sorcery within his jurisdiction. Some time after this, the

unfortunate monarch was overtaken by trouble and distress. His enemies had risen up and were gathered in fearful strength around him. His 'heart greatly trembled;' a dark and gloomy presentiment came over his spirit, and his bosom was convulsed by an agony of solicitude. He turned toward his God for light and strength. He applied for relief to the priests of the altar, and to the prophets of the most High; but his prayers were not answered and his efforts were vain. In his sorrow and apprehension he appealed to a woman who was reputed to have supernatural powers, and to hold communion with spiritual beings; thus violating his own law and departing from duty and fidelity to his God. He begged her to recall Samuel to life, that he might be comforted and instructed by him. She pretended to comply with his request; but before she could commence her usual mysterious operations, Samuel arose! And the forlorn, wretched and heart-broken king listened to his tremendous doom, as it was uttered by the spirit of the departed prophet.

I have alluded particularly to the witch of Endor, because she will serve as a specimen and instance of the sorcery or divination of antiquity. She was probably possessed of some secret knowledge of natural properties, was skilful in the use of her arts and pretended charms, had perhaps the peculiar powers of a ventriloquist, and by successful imposture, had acquired an uncommon degree of notoriety and the entire confidence of the public. She professed to be in alliance with supernatural beings, and by their assistance to raise the dead.

This passage has afforded a topic for a great deal of discussion among interpreters. It seems to me on the face of the narrative to suggest the following view of the transaction. The woman was an impostor. When she summoned the spirit of Samuel, instead of the results of her magic lantern or of whatever contrivances she may have had, by the immediate agency of the Almighty, the spirit of Samuel really rose, to the consternation and horror of the pretended necromancer. The writer appears to have in-

licated that this is the proper interpretation of the scene, by saying, 'that when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice ;' thus giving evidence of alarm and surprise totally different from the deportment of such pretenders on such occasions ; they used rather to exhibit joy at the success of their arts, and a proud composure and dignified complacency, in the control they were believed to exercise over the spirits that appeared to have obeyed their call. Sir Walter Scott takes this view of the transaction. His opinion, it is true, would be considered more important in any other department than that of biblical interpretation ; on all questions, however, connected with the spiritual world of fancy and with its history, he must be allowed to speak, if not with the authority, with the tone of a master. This wonderful author in the infinite profusion and variety of his productions, has recently written a volume upon Demonology and Witchcraft ; it is of course entertaining and instructive, and I would recommend it to all who are curious to know the capacity and

to witness the operations of the human imagination.

It will be regarded by intelligent and judicious persons, as a circumstance of importance in reference to the view now given of the transaction, in which the witch of Endor acts the leading part, that Hugh Farmer, beyond all question, the most learned, discreet and profound writer on such subjects, is inclined to throw the weight of his authority in its favor. His ample and elaborate discussion of the question is to be seen in his work on Miracles, chap. iv. sec. II.

Among the heathen nations of antiquity the art of divination consisted to a great degree in the magical use of mysterious charms. Many plants were considered as possessed of wonderful virtues, and there was scarcely a limit to the supposed power of those persons who knew how to use and apply them skillfully. Virgil in his eighth eclogue thus speaks of this species of sorcery—

‘ These herbs did Mœris givo to me  
And poisons pluckt at Pontus,

For there they grow and multiplie  
 And do not so amongst us ;  
 With these she made herselfe become  
 A wolfe, and hid hir in the wood,  
 She fetcht up souls out of their toome,  
 Removing corne from where it stood.\*

In the fourth *Æneid*, the lovesick Tyrian queen is thus made to describe the magic which was then believed to be practised.

‘ Rejoice,’ she said, ‘ instructed from above.  
 My lover I shall gain or lose my love,  
 Nigh rising Atlas, next the falling sun  
 Long tracts of Ethiopian climates run ;  
 There a Massylian priestess I have found,  
 Honored for age, for magic arts renown’d ;  
 Th’ Hesperian temple was her trusted care,  
 ’Twas she supplied the wakeful dragon’s fare.  
 She, poppy-seeds in honey taught to steep,  
 Reclaim’d his rage, and sooth’d him into sleep ;  
 She watch’d the golden fruit. Her charms unbind  
 The chains of love, or fix them on the mind ;  
 She stops the torrent, leaves the channel dry,  
 Repels the stars, and backward bears the sky,

\* ‘ Has herbas, atque hæc Ponto mihi lecta venena  
 Ipse dedit Mœris ; nascuntur plurima Ponto.  
 His ego saepe lupum fieri, et se condere silvis,  
 Moerin, saepe animas imis excire sepulcris  
 Atque satas alio vidi traducere messis.’

The yawning earth rebellows to her call,  
Pale ghosts ascend, and mountain ashes fall.\*

Tibullus in the second Elegy of his first book gives the following account of the powers ascribed to a magician.

\* She plucks each star out of his throne  
And turneth back the raging waves,  
With charms she makes the earth to cone,  
And raiseth souls out of their graves ;  
She burns men's bones as with a fire  
And pulleth down the lights of Heaven,  
And makes it snow at her desire  
E'en in the midst of summer season.†

\* ' Inveni, germana, viam, gratare sorori,  
Quae mihi reddat eum, vel eo me solvat amantem.  
Oceani finem juxta, solemque cadentem  
Ultimus Aethiopum locus est, ubi maximus Atlas  
Axem humero torquet, stellis ardentibus aptum.  
Hinc mihi massylæ gentis monstrata sacerdos  
Hesperidum templi custos, epulasque draconi  
Quae dabat, et sacros servabat in arbore ramos  
Spargens humida mella, soporiferumque papaver.  
Haec se carminibus promittit solvere mentis  
- Quas velit, ast aliis duras immittere curas ;  
Sistere aquam fluviis, et vertere sidera retro,  
Nocturnosque ciet manis ; mugire videbis  
Sub pedibus terram, et descendere montibus ornos.'

† ' Hanc ego de coelo ducentem sidera vidi ;  
Fluminis haec rapidi carmine sistit iter,

These views continued to hold undisturbed dominion over the people during a long succession of centuries. As the twilight of the dark ages began to settle upon christendom, superstition, that night blooming plant, grew with increased rapidity and spread itself over the surface of the world. While everything else drooped and withered, it struck deeper its roots, spread wider its branches and brought forth more abundantly its fruit. The unnumbered fables of Greek and Roman mythology, the arts of augury, and divination, the visions of oriental romance, the fanciful and attenuated theories of the later philosophy, the abstract and spiritual doctrines of Platonism, and all the grosser and wilder conceptions of the northern conquerors of the Roman Empire, became mingled together in the faith of the inhabitants of the European kingdoms. From this multifarious

*Haec cantu finditque solum manesque sepulcris*

*Elicit et tepido devocat ossa rogo.*

*Jam ciet infernas magico stridore catervas;*

*Jam jubet asspersas lacte referre pedem*

*Quum libet, haec tristi depellet nubila coelo;*

*Quum libet, æstivo convocat orbe nives.'*



combination, the infinitely various popular superstitions of the modern nations have sprung.

We first begin to trace the clear outlines of the doctrine of witchcraft, correctly understood, about the time of the christian era. It has been seen that it pre-supposes the belief of the devil. I shall not enter upon the disputed question, whether the scriptures properly interpreted, require the belief of the existence of such a being. The voice of theological controversy must never be heard within this peaceful hall — but directing our attention solely to profane sources of information, we discover the heathen origin of the belief of the existence of the devil in the ancient system of oriental philosophy. Early observers of nature in the East, were led to the conclusion that the world was a divided empire, and that it was ruled by the alternate or simultaneous energy of two great antagonist principles or beings, one perfectly good, and the other perfectly bad. It has been for a / induced to encourage and turn to their own

long time, as it probably is at this day, the prevailing faith among christians that the Bible teaches a similar doctrine, and that it presents to our adoration and obedience a being of infinite perfections, in the Deity ; and to our abhorrence and our fears, a being infinitely wicked, and of great power in the Devil.

The natural and ultimate effect of the diffusion of christianity was to overthrow or rather to revolutionize the whole system of incantation and sorcery. In heathen countries, as in the East at present, no reproach or sentiment of disapprobation was necessarily connected with them, for the supernatural beings with whom the professors of those arts pretended to have intercourse, were not, with a few exceptions, regarded as evil beings. The persons who were thought to be skilful in their use were on the contrary held in great esteem, and looked upon with reverence. Magicians and philosophers were convertible and synonymous terms. Learned and scientific men were

advantage the popular credulity that ascribed their extraordinary skill to their connexion with spiritual and divine beings. At length, however, they found themselves placed in a very uncomfortable predicament by the prevalence of the christian doctrines. It was exceedingly difficult to dispel the delusion, and correct the error they had previously found it for their interest to perpetuate in the minds of the community. They could not convince them that their knowledge was acquired from natural sources, or their operations conducted solely by the aid of natural causes and laws. The people would not surrender the belief that the results of scientific experiments, and the accuracy of predictions of physical phenomena were secured by the assistance of supernatural beings.

As the doctrines of the gospel gradually undermined the popular belief in other spiritual beings inferior to the Deity, and were at the same time supposed to teach the existence and extensively diffused energy of an almost infinite and omnipotent agent of

evil, it was exceedingly natural, nay, it necessarily followed, that the same credulity and superstition which had led to the supposition of an alliance between philosophers and spiritual beings, should settle down into a full conviction that the devil was the being with whom they were thus confederated. The consequence was that they were charged with witchcraft, and many fell victims to the general prejudice and abhorrence occasioned by the imputation. The influence of this state of things was soon seen; it was one of the most effectual causes of the rapid diffusion of knowledge in modern times. Philosophers and men of science became as anxious to explain and publish their discoveries as they had been in former ages to conceal and cover them with mystery. The following instances will be sufficient to illustrate the correctness of these views.

In the thirteenth century, Roger Bacon was charged with witchcraft on account of his discoveries in optics, chemistry and astronomy, and although he did what he could to circulate and explain his own acquire-

ments, he could not escape a papal denunciation, and two long and painful imprisonments. In 1305, Arnold de Villa Nova, a learned physician and philosopher was burned at Padua, by order of inquisitors, on the charge of witchcraft. He was eighty years of age. Ten years afterwards, Peter Apon also of Padua, who had made extraordinary progress in knowledge, was accused of the same crime, and condemned to death; he expired previous to the time appointed for his execution.

I will now present a brief sketch of the prosecutions for witchcraft, that took place previous to the close of the seventeenth century. Some writers have computed that thirty thousand persons were executed for this supposed crime, within one hundred and fifty years. It will of course be in my power to mention only a few instances.

In 1484, Pope Innocent the Eighth, issued a bull encouraging and requiring the arrest and punishment of persons suspected of witchcraft. From this moment, the prosecutions became frequent and the victims nu-

merous in every country. The very next year, fortyone aged females were consigned to the flames in one nation, and not long after one hundred were burned by one inquisition, in the devoted valleys of Piedmont; fortyeight were burned in Ravensburg in five years, and in the year 1515, five hundred were burned at Geneva in three months! One writer declares that ‘almost an infinite number’ were burned for witchcraft in France, — one thousand in a single diocese! These sanguinary and horrible transactions were promoted and sanctioned by theological hatred and rancor. It was soon perceived that there was no kind of difficulty in clearing the church of heretics, by hanging or burning them all as witches! Luther was just beginning his attack upon the papal power, and he was instantly accused of being in confederacy with the devil.

In 1534, Elizabeth Barton, ‘the maid of Kent,’ was executed for witchcraft in England, together with seven men who had been confederate with her. In 1541, the Earl of Hungerford was beheaded for inquiring of a

witch how long Henry VIII. would live. In 1549, it was made the duty of Bishops, by Archbishop Cranmer's articles of visitation, to inquire of their clergy, whether 'they know of any that use charms, sorcery, enchantments, witchcraft, soothsaying or any like craft invented by the devil.' In 1563, the king of Sweden carried four witches with him, as a part of his armament, to aid him in his wars with the Danes. In 1576, seventeen or eighteen were condemned in Essex, in England. A single judge or inquisitor, Remigius, condemned and burned nine hundred within fifteen years, from 1580 to 1595, in the single district of Lorrain, as many more fled out of the country; whole villages were depopulated, and fifteen persons destroyed themselves rather than submit to the torture, which under the administration of this successor of Draco and rival of Jeffries, was the first step taken in the trial of an accused person. The application of the rack and other instruments of torment, in the examination of prisoners, was recommended by him in a work on witchcraft. He ob-

serves that 'scarcely any one was known to be brought to repentance and confession but by these means!'

The most eminent persons of the sixteenth century were believers in the popular superstition respecting the existence of compacts between Satan and human beings, and the notions associated with it. The excellent Melancthon was an interpreter of dreams and caster of nativities. Luther was a strenuous supporter of the doctrine of witchcraft, and seems to have seriously believed that he had had frequent interviews with the arch enemy himself, and had disputed with him on points of theology, face to face. In his 'Table Talk,' he gives the following account of his intimacy with the devil: speaking of his confinement in the castle of Wartburg, he says, 'among other things they brought me hazel-nuts, which I put into a box, and sometimes I used to crack and eat of them. In the night times, my gentleman, the devil, came and got the nuts out of the box, and cracked them against one of the bed-posts, making a very great noise and rumbling



about my bed, but I regarded him nothing at all ; when afterwards I began to slumber, then he kept such a racket and rumbling upon the chamber stairs, as if many empty barrels and hogsheads had been tumbled down.' Kepler, whose name is immortalized by being associated with the laws he discovered that regulate the orbits of the heavenly bodies, was a zealous advocate of astrology, and his great predecessor and master, the Prince of Astronomers, as he is called, Tycho Brahe, kept an idiot in his presence, fed him from his own table, with his own hand, and listened to his incoherent, unmeaning and fatuous expressions as to a revelation from the spiritual world.

The following is the language addressed to Queen Elizabeth, by Bishop Jewell. He was one of the most learned persons of his age, and is to this day regarded as the mighty champion of the church of England, and of the cause of the reformation in Great Britain. He was the terrible foe of Roman Catholic superstition. 'It may please your Grace,' says he, 'to understand that witches

and sorcerers within these four last years, are marvellously increased within your Grace's realm; your Grace's subjects pine away even unto the death; their color fadeth, their flesh rotteth, their speech is benumbed, their senses are bereft. I pray God,' continues the courtly preacher—'they never practise further than upon the subject.' The petition of the polite prelate appears to have been answered. The virgin queen resisted inexorably the arts of all charmers, and is thought never to have been bewitched in her life.

It is probable that Spenser in his 'Faerie Queene' has described with accuracy the witch of the sixteenth century in the following beautiful lines—

'There in a gloomy hollow glen she found  
A little cottage built of sticks and weedes,  
In homely wise, and wald with sods around  
In which a witch did dwell, in loathly weedes,  
And wilful want, all careless of her needes;  
So choosing solitarie to abide  
Far from all neighbors, that her devilish deedes,  
And hellish arts from people she might hide,  
And hurt far off unknowne whomever she envide.'

So prone were the people to indulge in the contemplation of the agency of the devil and his myrmidons, that they strained and violated and perverted the language of scripture to make it speak of them. Thus they insisted that the word Philistines meant confederates and subjects of the devil, and accordingly interpreted the expression — ‘I will deliver you into the hands of the Philistines,’ thus — ‘I will deliver you into the hands of demons.’

I cannot describe the extent to which the superstition we are reviewing was carried about the close of the sixteenth century in stronger language than the following, from a candid and learned French Roman Catholic historian — ‘So great folly,’ says he — ‘did then oppress the miserable world, that christians believed greater absurdities than could ever be imposed upon the heathens.’

We have now arrived at the commencement of the seventeenth century, within which the prosecutions of witchcraft took place in Salem. To show the opinions of the

clergy of the English church at this time, I will quote the following curious canon made by the convocation in 1603.

‘That no minister or ministers, without license and direction of the Bishop, under his hand and seal obtained, attempt upon any pretence whatsoever either of Possession or Obsession, by fasting and prayer, to cast out any devil or devils, under pain of the imputation of Imposture or Cozenage, and deposition from the ministry.’ — In the same year a license was actually granted, as required above, by the Bishop of Chester, and several ministers were duly authorized by him to cast out devils !

During this whole century there were trials and executions for witchcraft in all civilized countries. More than two hundred were hanged in England, thousands were burned in Scotland, and still larger numbers in various parts of Europe.

Edward Fairfax, the poet, was one of the most accomplished men in England. He is celebrated as the translator of Tasso’s

‘Jerusalem Delivered,’ in allusion to which work Collins thus speaks of him :

‘ How have I sate while piped the pensive wind  
 To hear thy harp, by British Fairfax strung,  
 Prevailing poet, whose undoubting mind  
 Believed the magic wonders that he sung.’

This same Fairfax prosecuted six of his neighbors for bewitching his children. — The trials took place about the time the first pilgrims came to America.

In 1634, Urbain Grandier, a very learned and eminent French minister rendered himself odious, by his moderation towards heretics, to the bigoted nuns of Loudun. Secretly instigated, as has been supposed by Cardinal Richelieu, against whom he had written a satire, they pretended to be bewitched by him, and procured his prosecution ; he was tortured upon the rack until he swooned, and then was burned at the stake. In 1640, Dr Lamb of London, was murdered in the streets of that city by the mob on suspicion of witchcraft. Several were hanged in England only a few years before the proceedings commenced in Salem. Some were tried by water ordeal,

and drowned in the process in Suffolk, Essex, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire, in England, at the very time, the executions were going on here. And a considerable number of capital punishments took place in various parts of Great Britain some years after the prosecutions had ceased in America.

The trials and executions in England and Scotland were attended by circumstances, as painful, as barbarous, and in all respects as disgraceful as those occurring in Salem, that were related in the former lecture. Every species of torture seems to have been resorted to ; the principles of reason, justice and humanity were set at defiance, and the whole body of the people were kept in a state of the most fierce excitement against the sufferers. Indeed, there is nothing more distressing in the contemplation of these sanguinary proceedings than the spirit of deliberate and unmitigated cruelty with which they were conducted. No symptoms of pity, compassion or sympathy appear to have been manifested by the judges or the community. The following account of the

expenses attending the execution of two persons convicted of witchcraft in Scotland, shews in what a cool business-like style the affair was managed.

For ten loads of Coals to burn them,	£3	6	8
For a Tar Barrel, . . . . .	0	14	0
For Towes, . . . . .	0	6	0
For harden to be jumps for them, . . .	3	10	0
For making of them, . . . . .	0	8	0
For one to go to Finmouth for the Laird			
to sit upon their assize as Judge, . .	0	6	0
For the executioner for his pains, . . .	8	14	0
For his expenses here, . . . . .	0	16	4

The brutalizing effects of capital punishments are clearly seen in these, as in all other instances. They gradually impart a feeling of indifference to the value of human life to all who become accustomed to the spectacle, or to the idea of cutting it off by the hand of violence. In various ways they exercise influences upon the tone and temper of society, which cannot but be regarded with regret by the citizen, the legislator, the moralist, the philanthropist and the christian.

Sinclair in his work called 'Satan's invisible world discovered,' gives the following affecting declaration made by one of the confessing witches as she was on her way to the stake. 'Now all you that see me this day, know that I am now to die as a witch by my own confession, and I free all men, especially the ministers and magistrates, of the guilt of my blood; I take it wholly upon myself, my blood be upon my own head; and, as I must make answer to the God of Heaven presently, I declare I am as free of witchcraft as any child, but being delated by a malicious woman, and put in prison under the name of a witch, disowned by my husband and friends, and seeing no ground of hope of my coming out of prison, or ever coming in credit again, through the temptation of the devil, I made up that confession on purpose to destroy my own life, being weary of it, and choosing rather to die than live.'

Sir George Mackenzie says that he went to examine some women who had confessed, and that one of them, who was a silly crea-



ture, told him, ‘undersecresie’ ‘that she had not confessed because she was guilty, but being a poor creature who wrought for her meat, and being defamed for a witch, she knew she would starve, for no person thereafter would either give her meat or lodging, and that all men would beat her, and hound dogs at her, and that therefore she desired to be out of the world.’ — Whereupon she wept most bitterly, and upon her knees called God to witness to what she said !

A wretch named Matthew Hopkins rendered himself infamously conspicuous in the prosecutions for witchcraft that took place in the counties of Essex, Sussex, Norfolk and Huntingdon in England in the year 1645 and 1646. The title he assumed indicates the part he acted, it was ‘Witch-finder General.’ He travelled from place to place, his expenses were paid, and he required, in addition, regular fees for the discovery of a witch. His methods of detection were similar in some respects to those described in the former lecture, but much more barbarous. Besides pricking the body to find

the witch mark, he compelled the wretched and decrepid victims of his cruel practices, to sit in a painful posture upon an elevated stool, with their limbs crossed, and if they persevered in refusing to confess he would prolong their torture in some cases to more than twentyfour hours ; he would prevent their going to sleep, and drag them about barefoot over the rough ground, thus overcoming them with extreme weariness and pain ; but his favorite method was to tie the thumb of the right hand close to the great toe of the left foot and draw them through a river or pond ; if they floated, as they would be likely to do while their heavier limbs were thus sustained and upborne by the rope, it was considered as conclusive proof of their guilt. This monster was encouraged and sanctioned by the government, and he procured the death in one year and in one county, of more than three times as many as suffered in Salem during the whole delusion. He and his exploits are referred to in the following lines from that store-house of good sense and keen wit, Butler's Hudibras.

‘Hath not this present Parliament  
 A leiger to the Devil sent,  
 Fully empowered to treat about  
 Finding revolted witches out?  
 And has he not within a year  
 Hanged three score of them in one shire?’

The infatuated people looked upon this Hopkins with admiration and astonishment, and could only account for his success by the supposition, which we are told was generally entertained, that he had stolen the memorandum book in which Satan had recorded the names of all the persons in England who were in league with him !

The most melancholy circumstance connected with the history of this creature is, that Richard Baxter and Edmund Calamy, names dear and venerable in the estimation of all virtuous and pious men, were deceived and deluded by him — they countenanced his conduct, followed him in his movements, and aided him in his proceedings.

At length, however, some gentlemen, shocked at the cruelty, and suspicious of the integrity of Hopkins, seized him, tied his thumbs and toes together, threw him into a

pond, and dragged him about to their hearts' content. They were fully satisfied with the result of the experiment. It was found that he did not sink. He stood condemned on his own principles ; and thus the country was rescued from the power of the malicious impostor.

Among the persons whose death Hopkins procured, was a venerable gray headed clergyman, named Lewis. He was of the the church of England, had been the minister of a congregation for more than half a century, and was over eighty years of age. His infirm frame was subjected to the several tests, and even to the trial by water ordeal, he was compelled to walk almost incessantly for several days and nights, until, in the exhaustion of his nature, he was made to assent to a confession that was adduced against him in court ; which however he disowned and denied there and at all times from the moment he was released from the torments by which it was extorted from him, to the moment of his death. As he was about to die the death of a felon, he knew

that the rites of sepulture according to the forms of his denomination would be denied to his remains. The aged sufferer, it is related, read his own funeral service while on the scaffold. Solemn, sublime, and affecting as is this most admirable portion of the excellent ritual of the church, surely it was never performed under circumstances so well suited to impress with awe and tenderness, as when uttered by the calumniated oppressed and dying old man. Baxter had been tried for sedition on the ground that one of his publications contained a reflection upon Episcopacy, and was imprisoned for two years. It is a striking and melancholy illustration of the moral infirmity of human nature, that the author of the 'Saints' Everlasting Rest' — and the 'Call to the Unconverted,' permitted such a vengeful feeling against the establishment to enter his breast, that he took pleasure and almost exulted in relating the fate of this innocent and aged clergyman, whom he denominates in derision a 'Reading Parson.'

No name in English history is regarded with more respect and admiration by wise and virtuous men, than that of Sir Matthew Hale. His character was almost venerated by our ancestors, and it has been thought that it was the influence of his authority, more than anything else, that prevailed upon them to pursue the course they adopted in the prosecutions at Salem. This great and good man presided, as Lord Chief Baron, at the trial of two females, Amy Dunny and Rose Cullender, at Bury St Edmunds, in Suffolk, in the year 1664. They were convicted and executed.

Baxter relates the following circumstance, as having occurred at this trial. ‘A godly minister, yet living, sitting by to see one of the girls, (who appeared as a witness against the prisoners,) in her fits, suddenly felt a force pull one of the hooks from his breeches; and while he looked with wonder at what was become of it, the tormented girl vomited it up out of her mouth.’

To give an idea of the nature of the testimony upon which the principal stress was

laid by the government, I will extract the following passages from the report of the trial. ‘Robert Sherringham testified that the axletree of his cart happening, in passing to break some part of Rose Cullender’s house, in her anger at it, she vehemently threatened him, his horses should suffer for it; and within a short time all his four horses died; after which he sustained many other losses in the sudden dying of his cattle. He was also taken with a lameness in his limbs; and so far vexed with lice of an extraordinary number and bigness, that no art could hinder the swarming of them, till he burnt up two suits of apparel.’ ‘Margaret Arnold testified that Amy Dunny afflicted her children; they (the children) she said, would see mice running round the house, and when they caught them and threw them into the fire, they would screech out like rats.’ ‘A thing like a bee flew at the face of the younger child, the child fell into a fit and at last vomited up a twopenny nail, with a broad head, affirming that the bee brought this nail and forced it into her

mouth.' 'She one day caught an invisible mouse and throwing it into the fire, it flashed like to gunpowder. None besides the child saw the mouse, but every one saw the flash !'

In this instance we perceive the influence of prejudice in perverting evidence. The circumstance that the mouse was invisible to all eyes but those of the child, ought to have satisfied the court and jury, that she was either under the power of a delusion, or practising an imposture. But as they were predisposed to find something supernatural in the transaction, their minds seized upon the pretended invisibility of the mouse as conclusive proof of diabolical agency.

Many persons who were present expressed the opinion that the issue of the trial would have been favorable to the prisoners, had it not been for the following circumstance. Sir Thomas Browne, a physician, philosopher and scholar of unrivalled celebrity at that time, happened to be upon the spot, and it was the universal wish that he should be called upon the stand, and his



opinion be obtained on the general subject of witchcraft. An enthusiastic contemporary admirer of Sir Thomas Browne, thus describes him. 'The horizon of his understanding was much larger than the hemisphere of the world ; all that was visible in the heavens he comprehended so well, that few that are under them knew so much, and of the earth he had such a minute and exact geographical knowledge, as if he had been by Divine Providence ordained surveyor general of the whole terrestrial globe and its products, minerals, plants and animals.' His memory is stated to have been inferior only to that of Seneca or Scaliger, and he was reputed master of seven languages. Dr Johnson who has written his biography, sums up his character in the following terms. ' But it is not on the praises of others, but on his own writings, that he is to depend for the esteem of posterity ; of which he will not easily be deprived, while learning shall have any reverence among men ; for there is no science in which he does not discover some skill, and scarce any

kind of knowledge, profane or sacred, abstruse or elegant, which he does not appear to have cultivated with success.'

Sir Thomas Browne was considered by those of his own generation to have made great advances beyond the wisdom of his age. He claimed the character of a reformer, and gave to his principal publication the title of an 'Enquiry into Vulgar Errors.' So bold and free were his speculations that he was looked upon invidiously by many as a daring innovator, and did not escape the denunciatory imputation of heresy. Nothing could be more unjust, however, than this latter charge. He was a most ardent and zealous believer in the doctrines of the established church. He declares 'that he assumes the honorable style of a Christian,' not because 'it is the religion of his country,' but because, 'having in his riper years and confirmed judgment, seen and examined all, he finds himself obliged, by the principles of grace, and the law of his own reason, to embrace no other name but this.' He exults and 'blesses himself, that he liv-

ed not in the days of miracles, when faith had been thrust upon him ; but enjoys that greater blessing pronounced to all that believed and saw not ; nay, he goes so far as to say, that they only had the advantage of a bold and noble faith, who lived before the coming of the Saviour, and upon obscure prophecies and mystical types, could raise a belief.' The fact that such a man was accused of infidelity is an affecting proof of the injustice that is sometimes done by the judgment of contemporaries.

This prodigy of learning and philosophy went into court, took the stand, and declared his opinion in favor of the reality of witchcraft, entered into a particular discussion of the subject before the jury, threw the whole weight of his great name into the wavering scales of justice, and the poor women were convicted. The authority of Sir Thomas Browne, added to the other evidence perplexed Sir Matthew Hale. A reporter of the trial says, 'that it made this great and good man doubtful, but he was in such fears and proceeded with such caution, that he

would not so much as sum up the evidence, but left it to the jury with prayers, 'that the great God of Heaven would direct their hearts in that weighty matter.'

The result of this important trial established decisively, the interpretation of English law, and the printed report of it was used as an authoritative text book in the court at Salem.

The celebrated Robert Boyle flourished in the latter half of the seventeenth century, He is allowed by all to have done much towards the introduction of an improved philosophy and the promotion of experimental science. But he could not entirely shake off the superstition of his age.

A small city in Burgundy, called Mascon, was famous in the annals of witchcraft. In a work called 'The Theatre of God's Judgments,' published by Thomas Beard, in 1612, in London, there is the following passage. 'It was a very lamentable spectacle that chanced to the governor of Mascon, a magician, whom the devil snatched up in dinner-while, and hoisted aloft, carrying him

three times about the town of Mascon in the presence of many beholders to whom he cried on this manner, help, help, my friends ; so that the whole town stood amazed there-at ; yea, and the remembrance of this strange accident sticketh at this day fast in the minds of all the inhabitants of this country.' A malicious and bigoted monk who discharged the office of chief legend-maker to the Benedictine Abbey in the vicinity of Mascon, fabricated this ridiculous story for the purpose of bringing the governor into disrepute. An account of another diabolical visitation, suggested, it is probable, by the one just described, was issued from the press during the lifetime of Boyle, under the title of 'The Devil of Mascon ;' he gave his sanction to the work, promoted its version into English, and as late as 1678 publicly declared his belief of the supernatural transaction it related.

Witches were considered and treated as capital offenders by the laws of Pennsylvania and New York. Trials took place in both colonies not long before the Salem

tragedy commenced. William Penn presided on the bench at the trial of two Swedish women for witchcraft, the Grand Jury acting according to instructions given in a charge delivered by him, found bills against them, and they were saved only by some technical defect in the indictment. If they had been condemned and executed, it is probable, as the annalist of Philadelphia suggests, that a scene similar to that exhibited here would have been recorded in the history of the sober colony of Swedes, and Germans, and Dutch, and Quakers, who dwelt in the city of brotherly love and the adjoining country.

There had been trials and executions for witchcraft in New England previous to those in Salem; fifty years before, a woman was hanged for this supposed crime in Charlestown, and several at different times in Connecticut and other parts of the country. In 1688 an Irish woman named Glover was executed in Boston for bewitching four children, belonging to the family of a Mr Goodwin. She was a Roman Catholic, was very ignorant, and seems, moreover, to have been

crazy. The oldest of the children was only about thirteen years of age. They acted in the same manner as the children in Mr Parris' family described in the previous lecture. The most experienced physicians pronounced them bewitched. Their conduct, as it is related by Cotton Mather, was indeed very extraordinary. At one time they would bark like dogs, and then again they would purr like cats. 'Yea,' says he, 'they would fly like geese and be carried with an incredible swiftness, having but just their toes now and then upon the ground, sometimes not once in twenty feet, and their arms waved like the wings of a bird.'

One of the children seems to have had a genius scarcely inferior to that of Master Burke himself; there was no part nor passion she could not enact. She would complain that the old Irish woman had tied an invisible noose round her neck and was choking her, and her complexion and features would instantly assume the various hues and distortions, that would be natural to a person in such a predicament. She would declare

that an invisible chain was fastened to one of her limbs, and would limp about precisely as though it were really the case. She would say that she was in an oven ; the perspiration would drop from her face and she would exhibit every appearance of being roasted ; then she would cry out that cold water was thrown upon her, and her whole frame would shiver and tremble. She pretended that the evil spirit came to her in the shape of an invisible horse, and she would canter, gallop, trot and amble round the rooms and entries, in such admirable imitation, that an observer could hardly believe that a horse was not beneath her, and bearing her about. She would go up stairs with exactly such a toss and bound as a person on horseback would exhibit.

After some time, Cotton Mather took her into his own family to see whether he could not exorcise her. His account of her conduct while there is highly amusing for its credulous simplicity. The cunning and ingenious child seems to have taken great delight in perplexing and playing off her tricks



upon the learned man. Once he wished to say something in her presence, to a third person, which he did not intend she should understand. He accordingly spoke in Latin. But she had penetration enough to conjecture what he had said; he was amazed. He then tried Greek; she was equally successful. He next spoke in Hebrew; she instantly detected the meaning. At last he resorted to the Indian language and that she pretended not to know. He drew the conclusion that the evil being with whom she was in compact was acquainted familiarly with the Latin, Greek and Hebrew, but not with the Indian tongue.

It is curious to notice how adroitly she fell into the line of his prejudices. He handed her a book written by a Quaker, to which sect it is well known he was violently opposed; she would read it off with great ease, rapidity and pleasure. A book written against the Quakers she could not read at all. She could read Popish books, but could not decipher a syllable of the Assembly's Catechism. Dr Mather was violently opposed to the order and liturgy

of the church of England. The artful little girl worked with great success upon this prejudice. She pretended to be very fond of the book of Common Prayer, and called it her Bible ; it would relieve her of her sufferings in a moment to put it into her hands ; while she could not read a word of the scriptures in the Bible, she could read them very easily in this prayer-book ; but she could not read the Lord's prayer even in this her favorite volume. All these things went far to strengthen the conviction of Dr Mather, that she was in league with the devil, for this was the only explanation that could be given to satisfy his mind of her partiality to the productions of Quakers, Catholics and Episcopalians, and her aversion to the Bible and the Catechism.

She exhibited the most exquisite ingenuity in beguiling Dr Mather, by the force of a charm, the power of which he could not resist for a moment — flattery. He thus describes with a complacency, but thinly concealed under the veil of affected modesty, the part she played in order to give the im-

pression — which it was the great object of his ambition to make upon the public mind — that the devil stood in special fear of his presence.

‘There then stood open the study of one belonging to the family, into which entering, she stood immediately on her feet and cried out, “They are gone! They are gone! They say that they cannot, — God won’t let ’em come here!” adding a reason for it, which the owner of the study thought more kind than true!! She would be faint at first, (after entering the holy and charmed apartment,) and say, “She felt something go out of her,” the noises whereof we sometimes heard, like those of a mouse.’

Even in her most riotous proceedings, she kept her eye fixed upon the Doctor’s weak point. When he called the family to prayers, she would whistle, and sing, and yell, to drown his voice, would strike at him with her fist, and try to kick him. But her hand or foot would always recoil when within an inch or two of his body; thus giving the idea that there was a sort of invisible coat of mail, of heavenly temper, and proof against the assaults of the devil, around his sacred person!

After a while Dr Mather concluded to prepare an account of these extraordinary circumstances, wherewithal to entertain his congregation in a sermon. She seemed to be quite displeased at the thought of his making public the doings of her master, the evil one ; attempted to prevent his writing the intended sermon, and disturbed and interrupted him in all manner of ways. For instance, she once knocked at his study door, and said that 'there was somebody down stairs, that would be glad to see him ;' — he dropped his pen and went down ; upon entering the room he found nobody there but the family. The next time he met her, he undertook to chide her for having told him a falsehood. She denied that she had told a falsehood. 'Did'nt you say,' said he, 'that there was somebody down stairs that would be glad to see me?' 'Well,' she replied with inimitable pertness, 'is not Mrs Mather always glad to see you ?'

She even went much farther than this in persecuting the good man while he was writing his sermon ; she threw large books at his head. But he struggled manfully against these buffet-

ings of Satan, as he considered her conduct to be, finished the sermon, related all these circumstances in it, preached and published it. Richard Baxter wrote the preface to an edition printed in London, in which he declares that he who will not be convinced by all the evidence Dr Mather presents, that the child was bewitched, 'must be a very obdurate Sadducee.' It is so obvious that in this whole affair, Cotton Mather was grossly deceived and audaciously imposed upon by the most consummate and precocious cunning, that it needs no comment. I have given this particular account of it, because there is reason to believe that it originated the delusion in Salem. It occurred only four years before ; Dr Mather's account of the transaction filled the whole country, and it is probable that the children in Mr Parris' family undertook to reenact it.

There is nothing in the annals of the histrionic art more illustrative of the infinite versatility of the human faculties both physical and mental, and of the amazing extent to which cunning, ingenuity, contrivance,

quickness of invention and presence of mind can be cultivated even in very young persons, than such cases as this just related. It seems, at first, incredible, that a mere child could carry on such a complex piece of fraud and imposture, as that enacted by the little girl whose achievements have been immortalized by the famous author of the *Magnalia*. Many other instances, however, are found recorded in the history of the delusion we are discussing.

In the year 1679, the house of Mr Morse of Newbury was for more than two months infested in a most strange and vexatious manner ; stones were thrown through the windows and down the chimney ; the furniture cast out of doors ; the implements of cookery flew about most mysteriously from one end of the room to the other ; ashes were scattered over the food prepared for dinner ; the milk-pails were filled with dirt in an unaccountable manner : the family consisted of a man, his wife and a little grandson ; they slept in the same chamber. After retiring to bed a stone weighing more

than three pounds was let fall on the stomach of the man, a box and a board were thrown upon them, and they were beaten with a bag of hops. While the man was at prayer with his family, he was struck on the back of his head with the broom, ashes were thrown into his face, his light was blown out, and he beaten in the dark with a pair of leather breeches, his hair and beard pulled, and his body scratched. The clothes that covered them were violently pulled off the bed ; stones were thrown at them, and the man's night-cap twitched from his head while sitting by the fire ; a candlestick was flung at him, and he was pricked by a bodkin until the blood came ; pails of water or whatever might happen to be near at hand, were emptied upon them, until they were 'brought,' as Increase Mather observes, 'into an uncomfortable pickle.' Cotton Mather and his father both relate these circumstances in great detail as evidence of the terrible power of Satan. There can scarcely be a doubt, that all the trouble which fell upon the old people and perplexed and

wore them down from week to week, and from month to month, was occasioned by the mischievous contrivance and malicious agency of their grandchild. He pretended to suffer more than they did from the vexations of the devil ; he would swoon away, and appear to be distracted, would throw himself into the chimney corner, and cry out that he was pinched, bitten, &c. His tongue used to hang out of his mouth ; he would bark and act like a dog, and cluck like a hen. By his ready wit and great cunning, aided by the blind and terrified credulity of his grandparents, he succeeded in effectually deceiving and imposing upon them for a long period. Indeed, neither they nor those who relate the circumstances, seem ever to have suspected him, but it is obvious to me from the accounts given of the affair that he was the author and cause of all the mischief.

Hutchinson gives an account of a similar deception. It is condensed from a more particular narrative contained in the Massachusetts Historical Collections, vol. 10,



sec. 2. In the year 1720 at Littleton in the county of Middlesex, a family was supposed to be bewitched. 'One I. B. had three daughters, of eleven, nine and five years of age. The eldest was a forward girl, and having read and heard many strange stories, would surprise the company where she happened to be with her manner of relating them. Pleased with the applause, she went from stories she had heard, to some of her own framing, and so on to dreams and visions, and attained the art of swooning, and of being to all appearance for some time breathless. Upon her revival she would tell of strange things she had met with in this and other worlds. When she met with the words, God, Christ, the Holy Ghost, in the Bible, she would drop down with scarce any signs of life in her. Strange noises were often heard in and upon the house, stones came down the chimney and did great mischief. She complained of the spectre of Mrs D——y, a woman living in the town ; and once the mother of the girl struck at the place where the said D——y,

was, and the girl said 'you have struck her on the body,' and upon inquiry, it was found that D——y, complained of a hurt on her body about that time. Another time, the mother struck at a place, where the girl said there was a yellow bird, and she told her mother she had hit the side of its head, and again it appeared that D——y's head was hurt about the same time. It was common to find her in ponds of water, crying out she would be drowned, sometimes upon the top of the house, and sometimes upon the tops of trees, where she pretended she had flown, and some fancied they had seen her in the air. There were often the marks of blows and pinches upon her, which were supposed to come from an invisible hand. The second daughter, after her sister had succeeded so well, imitated her in complaints of D——y, and outdid her in feats of running upon the barn, climbing trees, &c, and what, was most surprising, the youngest attempted the same feats and in some instances went beyond her sisters. The neighbors agreed that they were under an evil hand

and it was pronounced a piece of witchcraft, as certain as that there ever had been any at Salem ; and no great pains were taken to detect the imposture. Physicians had been at first employed, but to no purpose, and afterwards ministers were called to pray over them, but without success. At length, D——y, not long after the supposed blows, took to her bed, and after some time died, and the two eldest girls ceased complaining ; the youngest held out longer ; but all persisted in it, that there had been no fraud.

The eldest not having been baptized, and being come to adult age, desired and obtained baptism, and the minister then examined her upon her conduct in the affair, and she persisted in her declarations of innocency. In 1728, having removed to Medford, she offered to join the church there, and gave a satisfactory account of herself to the minister of the town ; but he knew nothing of the share she had in this transaction. The Lord's day before she was to be admitted, he happened to preach from this text, ' He that speaketh lies shall not escape.' The woman

supposed the sermon to be intended for her, and went to the minister, who told her nobody had made any objection against her, but being determined to confess her guilt, she disclosed the fraud of herself and sisters, and desired to make a public acknowledgment in the face of the church; and accordingly did so. The two sisters, seeing her pitied, had become actors also with her, without being moved to it by her, but when she saw them follow her, they all joined in secret and acted in concert; they had no particular spite against D——y; but it was necessary to accuse somebody, and the eldest having pitched upon her, the rest followed. The woman's complaints, about the same time the girl pretended she was struck, proceeded from other causes, which were not then properly inquired into. Once, at least, they were in great danger of being detected in their tricks; but the grounds of suspicion were overlooked, through the indulgence and credulity of their parents.'

As far back as the year 1560, a similar instance of juvenile imposture occurred at

**Amsterdam.** Twenty or thirty boys pretended to be suddenly seized with a kind of rage and fury, were cast upon the ground, and tormented with great agony. These fits were intermittent, and when they had passed off, their subjects did not seem to be conscious of what had taken place ; while they lasted, the boys threw up apparently from their stomachs a large number of needles, pins, thimbles, pieces of cloth, fragments of pots and kettles, bits of glass, locks of hair, and a variety of other articles. There was no doubt at the time that they were suffering under the influence of the devil, and multitudes crowded round them, and gazed upon them, with wonder, awe and horror.

There were many cases in England of a similar kind ; while among the North American Indians, such feats were practised regularly and professionally by the Powaws, and were looked upon by the ignorant tribes as the operations of a present Deity.

Dr Harsenet, afterwards Archbishop of York, who was among the first to contribute by his wit and satire to the overthrow of

the superstitions of demonology, thus describes the motives and the methods of such impostors.

‘ Out of these,’ saith he, ‘ is shaped us the true idea of a witch ; an old weather-beaten crone, having her chin and her knees meeting for age, walking like a bow, leaning on a staff ; hollow-eyed — untoothed, furrowed on her face, having her limbs trembling with the palsy, going mumbling in the streets : one that hath forgotton her Pater-noster, and yet hath a shrewd tongue to call a Drab a Drab. If she hath learned of an old wife in a chimney-end, Pax, Max, Fax, for a spell or can say Sir John Grantham’s curse for the miller’s eels, “ all ye that have stolen the miller’s eels, Laudate dominum de cœlis : and all they that have consented thereto, Benedicamus domino : ” why then beware, look about you my neighbors. If any of you have a sheep sick of the giddies, or a hog of the mumps, or a horse of the staggers, or a knavish boy of the school, or an idle girl of the wheel, or a young drab of the sullens and hath not fat enough for her

porrage, or butter enough for her bread, and she hath a little help of the epilepsy or cramp, to teach her to roll her eyes, wry her mouth, gnash her teeth, startle with her body, hold her arms and hands stiff, &c, and then when an old Mother Nobs hath by chance called her an idle young housewife or bid the devil scratch her; then no doubt but Mother Nobs is the witch, and the young girl is owl blasted, &c. They that have their brains baited and their fancies distempered with the imaginations and apprehensions of witches, conjurers and fairies, and all that Lymphatic chimera, I find to be marshalled in one of these five ranks; children, fools, women, cowards, sick or black melancholic discomposed wits.'

The imputation of witchcraft could be fixed upon any one with the greatest facility. In the early part of the fifteenth century, the Earl of Bedford having taken the celebrated Joan of Arc prisoner, put her to death on this charge. She had been almost adored by the people, who were rescued by her romantic valor, and was universally known

among them by the venerable title of ‘ Holy Maid of God’ — but no difficulty whatever was experienced by her enemies in procuring evidence enough to lead her to the stake as an instrument and servant of the devil.

Sylvester the second, was made Pope about the year 1000 ; his original name was Gilbert, and his native country France. Early in life he obtained by bribery and corruption, a rapid promotion in the church, and became Archbishop of Ravenna. He acquired the papal crown in the following manner. He made a bargain with Satan, by which the exclusive possession of his soul after death was transferred to him, on the condition that he should put forth his great influence among the cardinals, in such a manner as to secure the Archbishop’s election to the throne of St Peter. The arrangement was carried into successful operation. — Sylvester consulted the devil through the medium of a brazen head, during his whole reign, and enjoyed his faithful friendship and unwavering patronage. But when his Holiness came to die, he endeav-



ored to defraud Satan of his rightful claims to his soul by repenting of and acknowledging his sins. This curious representation is the product, it is probable, of envy and malignity. I have alluded to it in order to show how easy it was to fix the imputation of diabolical confederacy and co-operation upon any one. The story, whatever may have been its origin, is at any rate a pleasant satire upon the character of the arts by which ambitious and aspiring ecclesiastics attain to pre-eminence in their several churches and denominations.

Witchcraft was treated with the serious consideration that was appropriate to an interesting and important science, and occupied a wide and dignified department in the literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It will be proper to present a view of the manner in which it was discussed.

Gaule, one of the most exact writers on the subject, arranges witches into the following classes. 1, The diviner, gypsy or fortune-telling witch ; 2d, the astrologian, star-gazing, planetary, prognosticating witch ; 3d,

the chanting, canting or calculating witch who works by signs or numbers ; 4th, ' the venefick or poisonous witch ; 5th, the exorcist or conjuring witch ; 6th, the gastronomic witch ; 7th, the magical, speculative, sciential or arted witch ; 8th, the necromancer.'

Hallywell gives the following account of the means by which a person may place himself beyond the reach of the power of witchcraft. ' It is possible for the soul to arise to such a height, and become so divine, that no witchcraft or evil demons can have any power upon the body. When the bodily life is too far invigorated and awakened, and draws the intellect, the flower and summity of the soul, into a conspiracy with it, then are we subject and obnoxious to magical assaults. For magic or sorcery, being founded only in this lower or mundane spirit, he that makes it his business to be freed and released from all its blandishments and flattering devocations, and endeavors wholly to withdraw himself from the love of corporeity, and too near a sympathy with

the frail flesh, he, by it, enkindles such a divine principle as lifts him above the fate of this inferior world, and adorns his mind with such an awful majesty that beats back all enchantments, and makes the infernal fiends tremble at his presence, hating those vigorous beams of light which are so contrary and repugnant to their dark natures.'

The pure and elegant mind of the same beautiful writer found encouragement and security in the midst of the diabolical spirits with whom he believed the world to be infested, in the following views and speculations.

'For there is a chain of government that runs down from God, the Supreme Monarch, whose bright and piercing eyes look through all that he has made, to the lowest degree of the creation; and there are presidential angels of empires and kingdoms, and such as under them have the tutelage of private families; and lastly, every man's particular guardian genius. Nor is the inanimate or material world left to blind chance or fortune, but there are likewise mighty and

potent spirits, to whom is committed the guidance and care of the fluctuating and uncertain motions of it, and by their ministry, fire and vapor, storms and tempests, snow and hail, heat and cold, are all kept within such bounds and limits, as are most serviceable to the ends of Providence. They take care of the variety of seasons, and superintend the tillage and fruits of the earth; upon which account, Origen calls them *invisible* husbandmen. So that all affairs and things being under the inspection and government of these incorporeal beings, the power of the dark kingdom, and its agents is under a strict confinement and restraint, and they cannot bring a general mischief upon the world without a special permission of a superior Providence.\*

\* 'How oft do they their silver bowers leave,  
To come to succor us, that succor want?  
How oft do they with golden pinions cleave  
The flitting skies; like flying pursuivant,  
Against foul fiends to aid us militant?  
They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,  
And their bright squadrons round about us plant,  
And all for love and nothing for reward:  
O why should heavenly God to man have such regard?'

SPENSER.

King James explains the circumstance, that witches could not weep, in rather a curious manner; ‘For as in a secret murther, if the dead carkasse bee at any time thereafter handled by the murtherer, it will gush out of bloud, as if the bloud were crying to the heaven for revenge of the murtherer, God having appointed that secret supernaturall signe, for triall of that secret unnaturall crime, so it appeares that God hath appointed (for a supernaturall signe of the monstrous impietie of witches,) that the water shall refuse to receive them in her bosome, that have shaken off them the sacred water of baptisme, and wilfully refused the benefite thereof; no, not so much as their eyes are able to shed teares, (threaten and torture them as ye please,) while first they repent, (God not permitting them to dissemble their obstinacie in so horrible a crime,) albeit, the woman kind especially be able otherwise to shed teares at every light occasion when they will—yea, although it were dissemblingly like the crocodiles.’

Reginald Scott, in introducing a Romish

form of adjuration, makes the following excellent remarks on the trial by tears. ‘But, alas, that teares should be thought sufficient to excuse or condemn in so great a cause, and so weightie a triall. I am sure that the worst sort of the children of Israel wept bitterlie; yea, if there were any witches at all in Israel, they wept. For it is written, that all the children of Israel wept. Finallie, if there be any witches in hell, I am sure they weepe; for there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. But God knoweth, many an honest matron cannot sometimes in the heaviness of her heart shed teares; the which oftentimes are more readie and common with crafty queans and strumpets, than with sober women. For we read of two kinds of teares in a woman’s eie, the one of true greefe, and the other of deceit. And it is written, that “*Dediscere flere fœninam est mendacium:*” which argueth that they lie, which saie that wicked women cannot weepe. But let these tormentors take heed, that the teares in this case, which runne down the widowe’s cheeks, with their crie, spoken of by Jesus Sirach, be not heard

above. But, lo, what learned, godlie and lawful meanes these Popish Inquisitors have invented for the triall of true or false teares.

“ ‘ I conjure thee, by the amorous tears, which Jesus Christ our Saviour shed upon the crosse for the salvation of the world ; and by the most earnest and burning teares of his mother, the most glorious Virgine Marie, sprinkled upon his wounds late in the evening ; and by all the teares which everie saint and elect vessell of God hath poured out heere in the world, and from whose eies he hath wiped awaie all teares, that if thou be without fault thou maist poure downe teares aboundantlie ; and if thou be guiltie, that thou weep in no wise ; In the name of the Father, of the Sonne, and of the Holie Ghost — Amen.” And note, saith he, that the more you conjure, the lesse she weepeth.’

A distinction was made between black and white witches. The former were those who had leagued with Satan for the purpose of doing injury to others, while the latter class was composed of such persons as had resorted to the arts and charms of divination

and sorcery, in order to protect themselves and others from diabolical influence. They were both considered as highly, if not equally criminal. Fuller in his 'Profane State,' thus speaks of them, 'Better is it to lap one's pottage like a dog, than to eat it mannerly with a spoon of the devil's giving. Black witches hurt and do mischief. But in deeds of darkness there is no difference of colors. The white and the black are both guilty alike in compounding with the devil.' White witches pretended to extract their power from the mysterious virtues of certain plants. The following form of charmed words was used in plucking them. —

'Hail to thee, holy herb,  
 Growing in the ground,  
 On the Mount of Calvarie  
 First wert thou found,  
 Thou art good for many a grief  
 And healest many a wound ;  
 In the name of sweet Jesu  
 I lift thee from the ground.'

While there can be no doubt that the superstitious opinions we have been reviewing were diffused generally, and cherished fondly, by the great body of the people of all ranks



and conditions, it would be unjust to truth not to mention that there were some persons in the times of our fathers, who looked upon them as empty fables and vain imaginations. Error has never yet made a complete and universal conquest. In the darkest ages and most benighted regions, it has been found to be impossible utterly to extinguish the light of reason. There always have been some in whose souls the torch of truth has been kept burning with vestal watchfulness; we can discern its glimmer here and there through the deepest night that has yet settled upon the earth. In the midst of the most extravagant superstition, there have been individuals who have disowned the popular belief; and have considered it a mark of wisdom and true philosophy, to discard the idle fancies and absurd schemes of faith, that possessed the minds of the great mass of their contemporaries. This was the case with Horace, as appears from the following passage.\*

\* *Somnia, terrores magicos, miracula, sagas,  
Nocturnos lemures portentaque; Thessala rides.*

‘ These dreams and terrors magical  
 These miracles and witches,  
 Night walking sprites or Thessal bugs,  
 Esteeme them not two rushes.’

The intellect of Seneca also rose above the reach of the popular credulity with respect to the agency of supernatural beings and the efficacy of mysterious charms.

If we could but obtain access to the secret thoughts of the wisest philosophers, and of the men of genius of antiquity, we should probably find that most of them were superior to the superstitions of their times. Even in the thick darkness of the dark ages there were minds too powerful to be kept in chains by error and delusion.

Henry Cornelius Agrippa, who was born in the latter part of the fifteenth century was perhaps the greatest philosopher and scholar of his period. In his early life he was very much devoted to the science of magic, and was a strenuous supporter of demonology and witchcraft. In the course of his studies and meditations, he was led to a change of views on these subjects, and did

all that he could to warn others from putting confidence in such vain, frivolous and absurd superstitions as then possessed the world. The consequence was that he was denounced and prosecuted as a conjurer, and was charged with having written against magic and witchcraft, in order the more securely to shelter himself from the suspicion of practising them. — As an instance of the calumnies that were heaped upon him, I would mention that Paulus Jovius asserted that ‘Cornelius Agrippa went always accompanied with an evil spirit in the similitude of a black dog,’ and that when the time of his death drew near, ‘he took off the enchanted collar from the dog’s neck, and sent him away with these terms, “Get thee hence, thou cursed beast, which hast utterly destroyed me,” neither was the dog ever seen after.’ Butler in his *Hudibras* has not neglected to celebrate this remarkable connexion between Satan and the man of learning —

‘Agrippa kept a Stygian pug  
I’ th’ garb and habit of a dog,  
That was his tutor, and the cur  
Read to th’ occult philosopher.’

John Wierus wrote an elaborate, learned and judicious book in which he treated at large of magic, sorcery and witchcraft, and did all that scholarship, talent and philosophy could do to undermine and subvert the whole system of the prevailing popular superstition. But he fared no better than his predecessor, patron and master Agrippa had. He also was accused of having attempted to persuade the world that there was no reality in supernatural charms and diabolical confederacies, in order that he might devote himself to them without suspicion or molestation, and was borne down by the bigotry and fanaticism of his times.

King James merely gave utterance to the general sentiment, and pronounced the verdict of public opinion in the following extract from the preface to his 'Demonologie' — 'Wierus, a German physician, sets out a public apologie for all these crafts-folkes, whereby, procuring for them impunitie, he plainly bewrays himself to have been of that profession.'

In 1669 a work was published in Lon-

don with the following title : ‘The Question of Witchcraft Debated, or a Discourse against their opinions that affirm Witches.’ It is a work of great merit, and would do honor to a scholar and logician of the present day. The author was John Wagstaffe of Oxford University ; he is described as a crooked, shrivelled little man, of a most despicable appearance. This circumstance, together with his writings against the popular belief in witchcraft, led his academical associates to accuse him, some of them in sport, but others with grave suspicion, of being a wizard. — Wood, the historian of Oxford, says, that ‘he died in a manner distracted, occasioned by a deep conceit of his own parts, and by a continual bibbing of strong and high tasted liquors.’ But poor Wagstaffe was assailed by something more than private raillery and slander. His heretical sentiments exposed him to the battery of the host of writers who will always be found ready to advocate a prevailing opinion. His principal opponent was Meric Casaubon, son of the famous Isaac Casaubon,

and who had before distinguished himself by an attack upon the credulity and superstitions of his age, in 'A Treatise upon Enthusiasm.' But Wagstaffe was not left entirely alone to defend the cause of reason and truth. He had one most zealous advocate and ardent admirer in the author of a work on 'The Doctrine of Devils,' published in 1676. This writer sums up a panegyric upon Wagstaffe's performance, by pronouncing it 'a judicious book, that contains more good reason, true religion, and right christianity, than all those lumps and cartloads of luggage, that hath been fardled up, by all the faggeters of demonologicalical winter-tales, and witchcraftical legendaries, since they first began to foul clean paper.'

Dr Balthasar Bekker of Amsterdam, who was equally eminent in astronomy, philosophy and theology, published a learned and powerful work, called 'The Enchanted World,' in 1691, in which he openly assailed the doctrines of Witchcraft and of the Devil, and anticipated many of the views and arguments presented in Farmer's excellent pub-

lications. . As a reward for his exertions to enlighten his fellow creatures, he was turned out of the ministry and assaulted by nearly all the writers of his age.

The conclusion to which we are brought<sup>7</sup> by a review of the seventeenth century, up to the period when the prosecutions took place here, is, that the witchcraft delusion pervaded the whole civilized world and every profession and department of society. It received the sanction of all the learned and distinguished English judges who flourished within the century from Sir Edward Coke to Sir Matthew Hale. It was countenanced by the greatest philosophers and physicians; was embraced by men of the highest genius and accomplishments, even by Lord Bacon himself. It was established by the convocation of Bishops, and preached by the clergy. Dr Henry More of Christ's College, Cambridge, in addition to his admirable poetical and philosophical works, wrote volumes to defend it. It was considered as worthy of the study of the most cultivated and liberal minds to discover and distinguish

‘a true witch by proper trials and symptoms.’ The excellent Dr Calamy has already been mentioned in this connexion ; and Richard Baxter wrote his work entitled ‘the Certainty of the World of Spirits,’ for the special purpose of confirming and diffusing the belief. He kept up a correspondence with Cotton Mather, and with his father, Increase Mather, through the medium of which he stimulated and encouraged them in their proceedings against supposed witches in Boston and elsewhere. The divines of that day seem to have persuaded themselves into the belief, that the doctrines of demonology were essential to the gospel, and that the rejection of them was equivalent to infidelity. A writer in one of our modern journals, in speaking of the prosecutions for witchcraft, happily and justly observes, ‘it was truly hazardous to oppose those judicial murders. If any one ventured to do so, the Catholics burned him as a heretic, and the Protestants had a vehement longing to hang him for an Atheist.’ The writings of Dr More, of Baxter and of Glan



vil had been circulating for a long time in every direction in New England, before the trials began in Salem.

We are probably now prepared to accede to the remarks of Dr Bentley, when he says that 'the agency of invisible beings, if not a part of every religion, is not contrary to any one. It may be found in all ages and in the most remote countries. It is then no just subject for our admiration, that a belief so alarming to our fears, so natural to our prejudices, and so easily abused by superstition, should obtain among our fathers, when it had not been rejected in the ages of philosophy, letters and even revelation.'

But justice to our ancestors requires us to continue the history of the witchcraft delusion, down beyond their age to our own times.

Prosecutions continued in the older countries after they had been abandoned here, although it soon began to be difficult, everywhere, to procure the conviction of a person accused of witchcraft. In 1716, a Mrs Hicks and her daughter, the latter aged nine

years, were hanged in Huntingdon in England, for witchcraft. In the year 1720, an attempt, already described, was made to renew the Salem excitement in Littleton, Massachusetts, but it failed ; the people had learned wisdom at a price too dear to allow them so soon to forget it. In a letter to Cotton Mather, written February 19th, 1720, the excellent Dr Watts, after having expressed his doubts respecting the sufficiency of the spectral evidence for condemnation, says, in reference to the Salem witchcraft, ‘ I am much persuaded that there was much immediate agency of the devil in these affairs, and perhaps there were some real witches too.’ Not far from this time, we find what was probably the opinion of the most liberal minded and cultivated people in England, expressed in the following language of Addison : ‘ To speak my thoughts freely, I believe in general that there is and has been such a thing as witchcraft, but at the same time, can give no credit to any particular instance of it.’

There was an execution for witchcraft in Scotland in 1722.

Sir William Blackstone, the great oracle of British law, and who flourished in the latter half of the last century, declared his belief in witchcraft in the following strong terms:—  
 ‘To deny the possibility, nay, the actual existence of witchcraft and sorcery, is, at once, flatly to contradict the revealed word of God, in various passages, both of the Old and New Testament, and the thing itself is a truth to which every nation in the world hath in its turn, borne testimony, either by examples seemingly well attested, or by prohibitory laws, which at least suppose the possibility of commerce with evil spirits.’

A systematic effort seems to have been made during the 18th century to strengthen and renew the power of superstition. Alarmed by the progress of infidelity, many eminent and excellent men availed themselves of the facilities, which their position at the head of the prevailing literature afforded them, to push the faith of the people as far as possible towards the opposite extreme of credulity.

It was a most unwise, and in its effects, deplorable policy. It was a betrayal of the cause of true religion. It was an acknowledgment that it could not be vindicated before the tribunal of severe reason. Besides all the misery produced by filling the imagination with unreal objects of terror, the restoration to influence during the last century of the fables and delusions of an ignorant age has done incalculable injury, by preventing the progress of christian truth, and sound philosophy ; thus promoting the cause of the very infidelity it was intended to check. The idea of putting down one error by setting up another, cannot have suggested itself to any mind that had ever been led to appreciate the value or the force of truth. But this was the policy of Christian writers from the time of Addison to that of Johnson. The latter expressly confesses that it was necessary to maintain the credit of the belief of the existence and agency of ghosts, and other supernatural beings, in order to help on the argument for a future state as founded upon the Bible.

Dr Hibbert, in his excellent book on the 'Philosophy of Apparitions,' illustrates some remarks similar to those just made by the following quotation from Mr Wesley,—

'It is true that the English in general, and indeed most of the men in Europe, have given up all accounts of witches and apparitions, as mere old wives' fables. I am sorry for it; and I willingly take this opportunity of entering my solemn protest against this violent compliment, which so many that believe the Bible pay to those, who do not believe it. I owe them no such service. I take knowledge, these are at the bottom of the outcry which has been raised, and with such insolence spread throughout the nation in direct opposition not only to the Bible, but to the suffrage of the wisest and best men in all ages and nations. They well know (whether Christians know it or not) that the giving up witchcraft is, in effect, giving up the Bible. And they know on the other hand, that, if but one account of the intercourse of men with separate spirits be admitted, their whole castle in the air

(deism, atheism, materialism) falls to the ground. I know no reason, therefore, why we should suffer even this weapon to be wrested out of our hands. Indeed, there are numerous arguments besides, which abundantly confute their vain imaginations. But we need not be hooted out of one ; neither reason nor religion requires this.'

The belief in witchcraft continued to hold a conspicuous place among the popular superstitions of New England during the whole of the last century. Many now living can remember the time when it prevailed very generally. Each town and village had its peculiar traditional tales, which were gravely related by the old, and deeply impressed upon the young.

Innumerable instances might be adduced. I have time to mention the following only :

A reputed witch, familiarly known by the name of 'Old Meg,' resided in Gloucester. After having been for many years the object of superstitious curiosity and dread to the inhabitants of the Cape, she came to her end in the following strange and mysterious manner.

At the time of the celebrated victorious siege of Louisburg by the colonial troops, in 1745, two soldiers of the Massachusetts line belonging to Gloucester happened to have their attention arrested by the movements of a crow that kept hovering near them; they threw stones and discharged their muskets at it, but could neither touch nor terrify it; the bird still continued flying round them, and cawing in their ears. At length it occurred to one of them that it might be 'Old Meg.' He communicated his suspicions to his comrade; and as nothing but silver was believed to have any power to injure a witch, they tore from their uniform some ornaments made of that metal, and discharged them at the crow. The experiment succeeded. At the first shot they broke its leg, and then killed it. When they returned to Gloucester, they found that 'Old Meg' had her leg broken, while walking by the fort in that place, at the precise time in which they brought down the crow. After lingering for a while she died, and upon examining her fractured limb, they discovered the identical silver buttons

which they had discharged from their muskets under the walls of Louisburg. The story of 'Old Meg' is still familiarly told in Gloucester, although the credulity which once received it as solemn truth, has nearly, if not entirely, passed away.

It is not probable that a larger number of traditions of the kind are to be found, within similar limits, in any part of the world than in the county of Essex. This is especially the case in the sea-faring towns that line our extended coast.

The legend of the 'Screeching Woman' of Marblehead, is worthy of being generally known. The story runs thus : — A piratical cruiser having captured a Spanish vessel during the seventeenth century, brought her into Marblehead harbor, which was then the site of a few humble dwellings. The male inhabitants were all absent on their fishing voyages. The pirates brought their prisoners ashore, carried them at the dead of the night into a retired glen and there murdered them. Among the captives was an English female passenger. The women who belonged to



the place heard her dying outcries, as they rose through the midnight air, and reverberated far and wide along the silent shores. She was heard to exclaim, 'O mercy, mercy, Lord Jesus Christ, save me! Lord Jesus Christ, save me!' Her body was buried by the pirates on the spot. The same piercing voice is believed to be heard at intervals, more or less often, almost every year, in the stillness of a calm star-light or clear moonlight night. There is something, it is said, so wild, mysterious and evidently superhuman in the sound, as to strike a chill of dread into the hearts of all who listen to it. The writer of an interesting article on this subject, in the *Marblehead Register* of April 3, 1830, declares that 'there are not wanting at the present day, persons of unimpeachable veracity and known respectability, who still continue firmly to believe the tradition, and to assert that they themselves have been auditors of the sounds described, which they declare were of such an unearthly nature as to preclude the idea of imposition or deception.'

When 'the silver moon unclouded holds

her way,' or when the stars are glistening in the clear cold sky, and the dark forms of the moored vessels are at rest upon the sleeping bosom of the harbor; when no natural sound comes forth from the animate or inanimate creation, but the dull and melancholy rote of the winding shore, how often at midnight is the watcher startled from the reveries of an excited imagination by the piteous, dismal, and terrific screams of the unlaidd ghost of the murdered lady!

A negro died a short time since, in that part of Danvers, called originally Salem Village, at a very advanced age. He was supposed to have reached his hundredth year. He never could be prevailed upon to admit that there was any delusion or mistake in the proceedings of 1692. To him the whole affair was easy of explanation. He believed that the witchcraft was occasioned by the circumstance of the devil's having purloined the church book, and that it subsided so soon as the book was recovered from his grasp. Perhaps the particular hypothesis of the venerable African was peculiar to himself;

but those persons must have a slight acquaintance with the history of opinions in this and every other country, who are not aware that the superstition on which it was founded has been extensively entertained by men of every color, almost, if not quite, up to the present day. If the doctrines of demonology have been completely overthrown and exterminated in our villages and cities, it is a very recent achievement, nay, I fear that in many places the auspicious event remains to take place.

In the year 1808, the inhabitants of Great Paxton, a village in Huntingdonshire in England, within sixty miles of London, rose in a body, attacked the house of an old woman, named Ann Izard, suspected of bewitching three young females, Alice Brown, Fanny Amey, and Mary Fox, dragged her out of bed into the fields, pierced her arms and body with pins, and tore her flesh with their nails, until she was covered with blood. They committed the same barbarous outrage upon her again, a short time afterwards, and would have subjected her to the water or-

deal if she had not found means to fly from that part of the country.

It is probable that some who hear me, recollect, that not far from the time when this transaction took place in England, that is, about twenty years ago, great numbers of people in this town went to see a person who pretended and was believed by many, to be bewitched. The clergy were called in to extricate her from the grasp of the evil one. Her place of abode was in Northey Street, not far from the western termination of Bridge Street.

The writer of the article 'Witchcraft,' in Rees' Cyclopædia, one of the latest compends of modern science, gravely maintains the doctrine of 'ocular fascination,' as explained in the last lecture.

Although the belief in witchcraft has nearly passed away, the civilized world is even yet full of necromancers and fortune-tellers. The mystic science of 'palmistry,' is still practised by many a haggard and muttering vagrant; and perhaps there are some now listening to me who, in the days of their youthful fancy, held out their hands, that

their future fortunes might be read in the lines of their palms, and their wild and giddy curiosity and anxious affections be gratified by information respecting wedding day, or absent lover.

The most celebrated fortune-teller, perhaps, that ever lived, resided in an adjoining town. The character of 'Moll Pitcher' is familiarly known in all parts of the commercial world. She died in 1813. Her place of abode was beneath the projecting and elevated summit of High Rock in Lynn, and commanded a view of the wild and indented coast of Marblehead, of the extended and resounding beaches of Lynn and Chelsea, of Nahant Rocks, of the vessels and islands of Boston's beautiful bay, and of its remote southern shore. She derived her mysterious gifts by inheritance, her grandfather having practised them before in Marblehead. Sailors, Merchants, and adventurers of every kind, visited her residence, and placed confidence in her predictions. People came from great distances to learn the fate of missing friends, or recover the possession of lost

goods. While the young of both sexes, impatient of the tardy pace of time, and burning with curiosity to discern the secrets of futurity, availed themselves of every opportunity to visit her lowly dwelling, and hear from her prophetic lips the revelation of the most tender incidents and important events of their coming lives. She read the future, and traced, what to mere mortal eyes, were the mysteries of the present or the past, in the arrangement and aspect of the grounds or settlings of a cup of tea or coffee. Her name has everywhere become the generic title of fortune-tellers, and occupies a conspicuous place in the legends and ballads of popular superstition. Her renown has gone abroad to the farthest regions, and her memory will be perpetuated in the annals of credulity and imposture. An air of romance is breathed around the scenes where she practised her mystic art, the interest and charm of which will increase as the lapse of time removes her history back towards the dimness of the distant past.\*

\* For a more particular account of Moll Pitcher and her methods of imposture, I would refer the reader to

We are told by travellers that there is at the present time scarcely a village in Syria, in which there is not some one who has the credit of being able to cast out devils. Astrology and Demonology are not only topics of general conversation, but are honored as sciences in the Oriental nations; and at this moment, while we are looking back with wonder and incredulity upon the belief in witchcraft of our ancestors here, and in the mother country, a British lady of remarkable intellectual powers and acquirements, and whose veins are full of England's best and noblest blood, is actually practising it on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean.

Lady Hester Stanhope, the grand-daughter of the immortal Chatham, and the niece of the equally immortal Pitt, and who seems to have inherited, in combination with great eccentricity of character, the talents and eloquence of her ancestors, lives in a style of Eastern

Mr Alonzo Lewis' History of Lynn. An excellent work of its kind, combining the accuracy of the annalist, and the minuteness of the antiquarian, with the beautiful conceptions of a poetical and cultivated mind.

splendor and magnificence, in the bosom of a lovely and sequestered valley about eight miles from the ancient Sidon.

She is probably at this very hour, gazing at the expanded canopy of heaven, as it sheds its sparkling light upon the ancient hills and sacred groves of Palestine — her soul absorbed in the fathomless mysteries of her loved astrology, and holding fancied communion with supernatural powers, and spirits of the departed.

A full and just view of the position and obligations of our ancestors, requires a previous knowledge of the state and principles of the law, as it then existed and was understood. Although the ancients did not regard the pretended intercourse between magicians or enchanters, and spiritual beings as criminal, yet we find that they enacted laws against the abuse of the power that resulted from the connexion. The old Roman code of the Twelve Tables contained the following prohibition: ‘that they should not bewitch the fruits of the earth; nor use any charms to draw their neighbors’ corn into, their own



fields.' There were several special edicts on the subject during the existence of the Roman state. In the early Christian councils, sorcery was frequently made the object of denunciation. At Laodicea, for instance, in the year 364, it was voted to excommunicate any clergymen who were magicians, enchanters, astrologers or mathematicians! The Bull of Pope Innocent VIII. near the close of the fifteenth century, has already been mentioned.

Dr Turner, in his history of the Anglo Saxons, says, that they had laws against sorcerers and witches, but that they did not punish them with death. There was an English statute against witchcraft, in the reign of Henry VIII. and another in that of Elizabeth.

Up to this time, however, the legislation of parliament on the subject, was merciful and judicious — for it did not attach to the guilt of witchcraft the punishment of death, unless it had been used to destroy life ; that is, unless it had become murder.

On the demise of Elizabeth, James of Scotland ascended the throne. His pedan-

tic and eccentric character is well known. He had an early and decided inclination towards abstruse and mysterious speculations. Before he had reached his twentieth year, he undertook to accomplish what only the most sanguine and profound theologians have ever dared to attempt. He expounded the book of Revelation. When he was about twentyfive years of age, he published a work on the Doctrine of Devils and Witchcraft. Not long after he succeeded to the British crown. It may easily be imagined that the subject of demonology, soon became a fashionable and prevailing topic of conversation in the royal saloons and throughout the nation. It served as a medium through which obsequious courtiers could convey their flattery to the ears of their accomplished and learned sovereign. His majesty's book was reprinted and extensively circulated. It was of course praised and recommended in all quarters.

The parliament, actuated by a base desire to compliment the vain and superstitious king, enacted a new and much more severe

statute against witchcraft, in the very first year of his reign. It was under this law that so many persons here and in England, were deprived of their lives. The blood of hundreds of their innocent fellow-creatures was thus unrighteously shed! It was a fearful price which these servile lawgivers paid for the favor of their prince.

But this was not the only evil that was brought about by courtly deference to the prejudices of King James. It was under his direction that our present translation of the scriptures was made. To please his royal majesty, and to strengthen the arguments in his work on demonology, the word 'witch' was used to represent expressions in the original Hebrew, that conveyed an entirely different idea, and it was freely inserted in the headings of the chapters.\* A person having a 'familiar spirit,' was a favorite description of a witch in the king's book. The translators, forgetful of their high and solemn

\* For a thorough discussion of the several Hebrew words that relate to Divination and Magic, see 'Wierus de Præstigiis,' l. 2. c. 1. .

function, endeavored to establish this definition by inserting it into their version. Accordingly, they introduced it in several places ; in the eleventh verse of the eighteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, for instance ; ‘ a consulter with familiar spirits.’ There is no word in the Hebrew which corresponds with ‘ familiar.’ And this is the important, the essential word in the definition. It conveys the idea of alliance, stated connexion, confederacy, or compact, which is characteristic and distinctive of a witch. The expression in the original, signifies ‘ a consulter with spirits’ — especially as was the case with the ‘ Witch of Endor,’ a consulter with departed spirits. It was a shocking perversion of the word of God, for the purpose of flattering a frail and mortal sovereign ! King James lived to see and acknowledge the error of his early opinions, and he would gladly have counteracted their bad effects ; but it is easier to make laws and translations than it is to alter and amend them.

While the law of the land required the capital punishment of witches, no blame

ought to be attached to judges and jurors for discharging their respective duties in carrying it into execution. It will not do for us to assert that they ought to have refused, let the consequences to themselves have been what they would, to sanction and give effect to such inhuman and unreasonable enactments. We cannot consistently take this ground, for there is nothing more certain than, that with their notions, our ancestors had at least as good reasons to advance in favor of punishing witchcraft with death, as we have for punishing any crime whatsoever in the same awful and summary manner. We appeal, in defence of our capital punishments, to the text of Moses, ‘Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.’ — The apologist of our fathers, for carrying into effect the law making witchcraft a capital offence, tells us in reply, in the first place, that this passage is not of the nature of a precept, but merely of an admonition ; that it does not enjoin any particular method of proceeding, but simply describes the natural conséquences of

cruel and contentious conduct ; and that it amounts only to this : that quarrelsome, violent and bloodthirsty persons will be apt to meet the same fate they bring upon others ; that the duelist will be likely to fall in private combat ; the ambitious conqueror to perish, and the warlike nation to be destroyed, on the field of battle. If this is not considered by us a sufficient and satisfactory answer, he advances to our own ground, points to the same text where we place our defence, and puts his finger on the following plain and authoritative precept : ‘Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.’ Indeed we must acknowledge that the capital punishment of witches is as strongly supported and fortified by the Scriptures of the Old Testament, at least as they appear in our present version, as the capital punishment of any crime whatever.

If we adopt another line of argument, and say that it is necessary to punish some particular crimes with death, in order to maintain the security of society, or hold up an impressive warning to others, here also we

find that our opponent has full as much to offer in defence of our fathers, as can be offered in our own defence. He describes, to us the tremendous and infernal power, which was universally believed by them to be possessed by a witch, a power which, as as it was not derived from a natural source, could not easily be held in check by natural restraints; neither chains nor dungeons could bind it down, or confine it. You might load the witch with irons, you might bury her in the lowest cell of a feudal prison, and still it was believed that she could send forth her imps, or her spectre, to ravage the fields, and blight the meadows, and throw the elements into confusion, and torture the bodies, and craze the minds of any who might be the objects of her malice.

Shakspeare in the description which he puts into the mouth of Macbeth, of the supernatural energy of witchcraft, does not surpass, if he does justice to, the prevailing belief on the subject:

‘ I conjure you, by that which you profess,  
(Howe’er you came to know it) answer me,

Though you untie the winds and let them fight  
 Against the churches; though the yesty waves  
 Confound and swallow navigation up;  
 Though bladed corn be lodged, and trees blown down;  
 Though castles topple on their warders' heads;  
 Though palaces and pyramids do slope  
 Their heads to their foundations; though the treasure  
 Of nature's germins tumble all together,  
 Even till destruction sicken, answer me  
 To what I ask you' ———

There was indeed an almost infinite power to do mischief associated with a disposition to do it. No human strength could, strip the witch of these mighty energies while she lived, nothing but death could destroy them. There was, as our ancestors considered, incontestable evidence, that she had put them forth to the injury, loss, and perhaps death of others.

Can it be wondered at, that under such circumstances, the law, connecting capital punishment with the guilt of witchcraft, was resorted to, as the only means to protect society and warn others from entering into the dark, wicked and malignant compact ?\*

\* It is not probable that even King James' Parliament would have been willing to go to the length of



There are other considerations that deserve to be weighed before a final judgment should be made up respecting the conduct of our fathers in the witchcraft delusion. Among these is the condition of natural science in their day. But little knowledge of the laws of nature was possessed, and that little was confined to a few. The world was still, to the mass of the people, almost as full of mystery in its physical departments as it was to its first inhabitants. Politics, Poetry, Rhetoric, Ethics, and History, had been cultivated to a great extent in previous ages, but the philosophy of the natural and material world was almost unknown. Astronomy, Chemistry, Optics, Pneumatics, and even Geography, were involved in the general darkness and error. Some of our most im-

Selden in his *Table Talk*, who takes this ground in defence of the capital punishment of witches. 'The law against witches does not prove there be any, but it punishes the malice of those people that use such means to take away men's lives. If one should profess that by turning his hat thrice and crying buz, he could take away a man's life, (though in truth he could do no such thing,) yet this were a just law made by the state, that whoever should turn his hat thrice, and cry buz, with an intention to take away a man's life, shall be put to death.'

portant sciences, such as Electricity, date their origin from a later period.

This remarkable tardiness in the progress of physical science for some time after the era of the revival of learning, is to be accounted for by referring to the erroneous methods of reasoning and observation then prevalent in the world. A false logic was adopted in the schools of learning and philosophy. The great instrument for the discovery and investigation of truth was the syllogism, the most absurd contrivance of the human mind; an argumentative process whose conclusion is contained in the premises; a method of proof, in the first step of which, the matter to be proved is taken for granted. In a word, the whole system of philosophy was made up of hypotheses, and the only foundation of science was laid in conjecture. The imagination, called necessarily into extraordinary action, in the absence of scientific certainty, was still further exercised in vain attempts to discover, unassisted by observation and experiment, the elements and first principles of nature.

It was remarked in the previous lecture, that it had reached a monstrous growth about the time to which we are referring. Indeed it may be said, that all the intellectual productions of modern times from the seventeenth century, back to the dark ages, were works of imagination. The bulkiest and most voluminous writings that proceeded from the cloisters or the universities, even the metaphysical disquisitions of the Nominalists and Realists, and the boundless subtleties of the contending schools of the 'Divine Doctors,' Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus, fall under this description. Dull, dreary, unintelligible and interminable as they are, they are still in reality works of fancy. They are the offspring, almost exclusively, of the imaginative faculty. It ought not to create surprise to find that this faculty predominated in the minds and characters of our ancestors, and developed itself to an extent beyond our conception; when we reflect that it was almost the only one called into exercise, and that it was the leading element of every branch of literature and philosophy.

It is true that in the earlier part of the seventeenth century, Lord Bacon made his sublime discoveries in the department of physical science. By disclosing the true method of investigation and reasoning on such subjects, he may be said to have found, or rather to have invented the key that unlocked the hitherto unopened halls of nature ; he introduced man to the secret chambers of the universe, and placed the thread in his hand by which he has been conducted to the magnificent results of modern science, and will undoubtedly be led on to results still more magnificent in times to come. But it was not for human nature to pass in a moment from darkness to light. The transition was slow and gradual ; a long twilight intervened before the sun shed its clear and full radiance upon the world.

The great discoverer himself refused to admit, or was unable to discern some of the truths his system had revealed. Bacon was numbered among the opponents of the Copernican or true system of Astronomy, to the day of his death ; so also was Sir Thomas

Browne, the great philosopher already described, and who flourished during the latter half of the same century. Indeed, it may be said, that at the time of the witchcraft delusion, the ancient empire of darkness that had oppressed and crushed the world of science had hardly been shaken. The great and triumphant progress of modern discovery had scarcely begun.

I shall now proceed to illustrate these views of the state of science in the world at that time by presenting a few instances. The slightest examination of the accounts which remain of occurrences that were deemed supernatural by our ancestors, will satisfy any one that they were brought about by causes entirely natural, although unknown to them. For instance, the following circumstances are attested by the Rev. James Pierpont, pastor of the church in New Haven, and there is no reason to doubt that the facts occurred as described by him.

In the year 1647, a new ship of about 150 tons, containing a valuable cargo, and several distinguished persons as passengers, put to

sea from New Haven in the month of January, bound to England. The vessels that came over the ensuing spring brought no tidings of her arrival in the mother country. The pious colonists were earnest and instant in their prayers, that intelligence might be received of the missing vessel. In the course of the following June, 'a great thunder-storm arose out of the northwest ; after which (the hemisphere being serene,) about an hour before sunset, a ship of like dimensions with the aforesaid, with her canvass and colors abroad (although the wind was northerly) appeared in the air, coming up from the harbor's mouth, which lies southward from the town, seemingly with her sails filled under a fresh gale, holding her course north, and continuing under observation, sailing against the wind for the space of half an hour.' The phantom-ship was borne along, until, to the excited imaginations of the spectators, she seemed to have approached so near that they could throw a stone into her. Her main-topmast then disappeared, then, her mizen-topmast, then her masts were en-

tirely carried away, and finally her hull fell off and vanished from sight, leaving a dull and smoke colored cloud which soon dissolved, and the whole atmosphere became clear. All affirmed that the airy vision was a precise copy and image of the missing vessel, and that it was sent to announce and describe her fate. They considered it the spectre of the lost ship, and the Rev. Mr Davenport declared in public, 'that God had condescended, for the quieting their afflicted spirits, this extraordinary account of his sovereign disposal of those for whom so many fervent prayers were made continually.'

The results of modern science enable us to explain the mysterious appearance. It is probable that some Dutch vessel, proceeding slowly, quietly and unconsciously on her voyage from Amsterdam to the New Netherlands, happened at the time to be passing through the Sound. At the moment the apparition was seen in the sky, she was so near that her reflected image was painted or delineated to the eyes of the observers, on the clouds, by laws of optics, now generally well

known, before her actual outlines could be discerned by them on the horizon. As the sun sunk behind the western hills, and his rays were gradually withdrawn, the visionary ship slowly disappeared, and the approach of night, while it dispelled the vapors from the atmosphere, effectually concealed the vessel as she continued her course along the Sound.

The optical illusions that present themselves on the sea-shore, by which distant objects are raised to view, the opposite capes and islands made to loom up, lifted above the line of the apparent circumference of the earth, and thrown into every variety of shape which the imagination can conceive, are among the most beautiful phenomena of nature, and they impress the mind with the idea of enchantment and mystery, more perhaps, than any others ; but they have received a complete solution from modern discovery.

It should be observed that the optical principles that explain these phenomena have recently afforded a foundation for the science or rather art of Nauscopy ; and there are persons in some places in the Isle of France, as



I have been told, whose calling and profession it is to ascertain and predict the approach of vessels; by their reflection in the atmosphere and on the clouds, long before they are visible to the eye or through the glass.

The following opinion prevailed at the time of our narrative. The discoveries in Electricity, itself a recent science, have rendered it impossible for us to contemplate it without ridicule. But it was the sober opinion of the age; 'A great man has noted it,' says a learned writer, 'that thunders break oftener on churches than any other houses, because demons have a peculiar spite at houses that are set apart for the peculiar service of God.'

Everything that was strange or remarkable, everything at all out of the usual course, everything that was not clear and plain was attributed to supernatural interposition. Indeed our fathers lived as they thought, continually in the midst of miracles, and felt themselves surrounded at all times, in all scenes, with innumerable invisible beings.

The beautiful verse of Milton describes their faith —

‘ Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth  
Unseen ; both when we wake and when we sleep.’

What was to him, however, a momentary vision of the imagination was to them like a perpetual perception of the senses ; it was a practical belief, an every-day common sentiment, an all-pervading feeling. But these supernatural beings very frequently became visible to the mortal eyes of our superstitious ancestors. The instances indeed were not rare, of individuals having seen the devil himself in human shape.

The following passage is extracted from a letter written to Increase Mather by John Higginson.

‘ The godly Mr Sharp who was ruling elder of the church of Salem, almost thirty years after, related it of himself, that being bred up to learning, till he was eighteen years old, and then taken off and put to be an apprentice to a draper in London, he yet, notwithstanding, continued a strong inclination and eager affection to books, with a

curiosity of hearkening after, and reading of the strangest and oddest books he could get ; spending much of his time that way to the neglect of his business ; at one time, there came a man into the shop and brought a book with him, and said to him, ‘ Here is a book for you, keep this till I call for it again,’ and so went away. Mr Sharp, after his wonted bookish manner, was eagerly affected to look into that book and read it, which he did ; but as he read in it, he was seized on by a strange kind of horror both of body and mind, the hair of his head standing up, and finding these effects several times, he acquainted his master with it, who observing the same effects, they concluded it was a conjuring book, and resolved to burn it, which they did. He that brought it in the shape of a man, never coming to call for it, they concluded it was the devil. He taking this as a solemn warning from God, to take heed what books he read, was much taken off from his former bookishness, confining himself to reading the Bible, and other known

good books of Divinity, which were profitable to his soul.'

Kircher relates the following anecdote with a full belief of its truth. He had a friend who was zealously and perseveringly devoted to the study of Alchemy. At one time, while he was intent upon his operations, a gentleman entered his laboratory, and kindly offered to assist him. In a few moments a large mass of the purest gold was brought forth from the crucible. The gentleman then took his hat and went out; before leaving the apartment, however, he wrote a recipe for making the precious article. The grateful and admiring mortal continued his operations, according to the directions of his visitor; but the charm was lost, he could not succeed, and was finally completely ruined by his costly and fruitless experiments. Both he and his friend Kircher were fully persuaded that the mysterious stranger visitor was the devil.

Baxter has recorded a curious interview between Satan and Mr White of Dorchester, Assessor to the Westminster Assembly.

‘The devil, in a light night stood by his bedside. The Assessor looked awhile whether he would say or do anything, and then said, “If thou hast nothing to do, I have;” and so turned himself to sleep.’ Dr Hibbert is of opinion that the Rev. Mr White treated his Satanic Majesty, on this occasion, with ‘a cool contempt, to which he had not often been accustomed.’

At the same time that the proceedings were taking place in Salem with reference to the witches, that is, in the summer of 1692, about a dozen evil spirits in the guise of Frenchmen and Indians were seen hovering around the houses and skulking over the fields and through the woods in the town of Gloucester. Their movements were observed by many of the inhabitants, and the whole population of the Cape was kept in a state of agitation and alarm in consequence of their mysterious appearance for three weeks. The inhabitants retired to the garrison, and put themselves in a state of defence against the diabolical besiegers. Sixty men were despatched from Ipswich in military array to

reinforce the garrison, and several valiant sallies were made from its walls ; much powder was expended, but no corporeal or incorporeal blood was shed. An account of these events was drawn up by the Rev. John Emerson, then the minister of the first parish in Gloucester, from which the facts now mentioned have been selected. It is very minute and particular. The appearance and dress of the supernatural enemies is described ; they wore white waistcoats, blue shirts and white breeches, and had bushy heads of black hair. Mr Emerson concludes his account by expressing the hope, that ‘ all rational persons will be satisfied that Gloucester was not alarmed last summer for above a fortnight together by real French and Indians, but that the devil and his agents were the cause of all the molestation, which at this time befel the town.’ It was regarded by the most considerate persons at the time, as an artful contrivance of the devil, to create a diversion of the attention of the pious colonists from his operations through the witches in Salem, and by dividing and distracting their

forces, to obtain an advantage over them in the war he was waging against their churches and their religion.

Indeed, there is nothing more curious or instructive in the history of that period, than the light which it sheds upon the influence of the belief of the personal existence and operations of the devil, when that belief is carried out fully into its practical effects. The christian doctrine had relapsed into a system almost identical with manicheism. Wierus thus describes Satan, as he was regarded in the prevalent theology. 'He possesses great courage, incredible cunning, superhuman wisdom, the most acute penetration, consummate prudence, an incomparable skill in veiling the most pernicious artifices under a specious disguise, and a malicious and infinite hatred towards the human race, implacable and incurable.' — Milton merely responded to the popular sentiment in making Satan a character of lofty dignity, and in placing him on an elevation not 'less than Archangel ruined.' Hallywell, in his work on witchcraft, declares that, 'that mighty

angel of darkness is not foolishly nor idly to be scoffed at, or blasphemed. 'The devil,' says he, 'may properly be looked upon as a dignity, though his glory be pale and wan, and those once bright and orient colors faded and darkened in his robes, and the scriptures represent him as a prince, though it be of devils.' Although our fathers cannot be charged with having regarded the devil in this respectful and deferential light, it must be acknowledged, that they gave him a conspicuous and distinguished, we might almost say, a dignified agency in the affairs of life, and the government of the world ; they were prone to confess, if not to revere his presence, in all scenes, and at all times. He occupied a wide space, not merely in their theology and philosophy, but in their daily and familiar thoughts.\*

Cotton Mather, in one of his sermons,

\* It is much to be regretted that Farmer, after having written with such admirable success upon the temptation, the demoniacs, miracles, and the worship of human spirits, did not live to accomplish his original design, by giving to the world a complete discussion and elucidation of the scripture doctrine of the devil.



carries home this peculiar belief to the consciences of his hearers, in a manner that could not have failed to quicken and startle the most dull and drowsy among them.

[‘No place,’ says he, ‘that I know of has got such a spell upon it, as will always keep the devil out. The meetinghouse, wherein we assemble for the worship of God, is filled with many holy people, and many holy concerns continually; but if our eyes were so refined, as the servant of the prophet had his of old, I suppose we should now see a throng of devils in this very place. The apostle has intimated that angels come in among us; there are angels it seems, that hark how I preach, and how you hear, at this hour. And our own sad experience is enough to intimate that the devils are likewise rendezvousing here. It is reported in Job, i. 5, “When the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan came also among them.” When we are in our church assemblies, O, how many devils do you imagine, crowd in among us! There is a devil that rocks one to sleep. There is a

devil that makes another to be thinking of, he scarcely knows what, himself. And there is a devil that makes another to be pleasing himself with wanton and wicked speculations. It is also possible, that we have our closets, or our studies gloriously perfumed with devotions every day ; but, alas ! can we shut the devil out of them ? No ; let us go where we will, we shall still find a devil nigh unto us. Only when we come to Heaven, we shall be out of his reach forever.’

It is very remarkable that such a train of thought as this, did not suggest to the mind of Dr Mather, the true doctrine of the Bible respecting the devil. One would have supposed, that in carrying out the mode of speaking of him as a person to this extent, it would have occurred to him that it might be that the scriptural expressions of a similar kind, were also mere personifications of moral and abstract ideas. In describing the inattention, irreverence, and unholy reflections of his hearers, as the operations of the devil ; it is wonderful that his eyes were

not opened to discern the import of our Saviour's interpretation of the parable of the tares, in which he declares that he understands by the devil, whatever obstructs the growth of virtue and piety in the soul, the causes that efface good impressions, and give a wrong inclination to the thoughts and affections, such as 'the cares of this world,' or 'the deceitfulness of riches.' By these are the tares planted, and by these is their growth promoted. 'The enemy that sowed them is the devil.'

Satan was regarded as the foe and opposer of all improvement in knowledge and civilization. The same writer thus quaintly expresses this opinion. He 'has hindered mankind for many ages, from hitting those useful inventions, which yet were so obvious and facile, that it is everybody's wonder that they were not sooner hit upon. The bemisted world must jog on for thousands of years without the knowledge of the loadstone, till a Neapolitan stumbled upon it about three hundred years ago. Nor must the world be blessed with such a matchless

engine of learning and virtue as that of printing, till about the middle of the fifteenth century. Nor could one old man all over the face of the whole earth, have the benefit of such a little though most needful thing as a pair of spectacles, till a Dutchman, a little while ago, accommodated us. Indeed, as the devil does begrutch us all manner of good, so he does annoy us with all manner of woe.'

Without a knowledge of this sentiment, the witchcraft delusion of our fathers could not have been wholly understood. They were under an impression that the devil having failed to prevent the progress of knowledge in Europe had abandoned his efforts to obstruct it effectually there, had withdrawn into the American wilderness, intending here to make a final stand, and had resolved to retain an undiminished empire over the whole continent, and his pagan allies, the native inhabitants. Our fathers accounted for the extraordinary descent and incursions of the evil one among them, at the time to which we have referred, on the supposition that it was a desperate effort to prevent

them from bringing civilization and christianity within his favorite retreat, and their souls were fired with the glorious thought, that by carrying on the war with vigor against him and his confederates, the witches, they would become chosen and honored instruments in the hand of God for breaking down and abolishing the last strong hold on the earth of the kingdom of darkness.

Great ignorance prevailed in the world at that time in some of the departments of intellectual and moral philosophy. While the imagination was called into a more extensive and energetic action, than at any succeeding or previous period, its properties and laws were but little understood ; the extent of the connexion between the will and the muscular system ; the reciprocal influence of the nerves, and the fancy ; and the strong and universally pervading sympathy between our physical and moral constitutions, were almost wholly unknown. These important subjects are but imperfectly understood, indeed, at the present day.

There is nothing more mysterious, than

the self-deluding power of the mind ; and there never were scenes in which it was more clearly displayed than the witchcraft prosecutions. Honest men testified with perfect confidence and sincerity to the most absurd impossibilities, while those who thought themselves victims of diabolical influence would actually exhibit in their corporeal frames all the appropriate symptoms of the sufferings their imaginations had brought upon them. But dreams appear to have been the most fruitful source of delusion. A large part of the evidence is susceptible of explanation by the supposition that the witnesses had confounded the visions of their sleeping, with the actual experiences of their waking hours.

In Mohra, in Sweden, in 1669, the idea obtained currency that children were carried off invisibly in the night by witches, to a place in which the devil held his court, and brought back again before the morning. It is probable that the children dreamed that they had made the mysterious ærial journey, and some old women also dreamed that they had conveyed them. The imaginations of all

the people became inflamed and bewildered, until they fancied and believed that they saw the whole operation. The particulars of the journeys, of the diabolical residence, and of all the proceedings there were related by a large number of confessing children and women. The minister of the place declared that one night the witches were congregated in infernal assembly upon the crown of his head, and that he had had a violent pain on the spot ever since. And one of them confessed that having been sent by the devil to torment the reverend gentleman, she had tried to drive a nail into his skull, but that it was so hard and thick that she could not penetrate it! Thus was his evidence confirmed and his head-ache explained!

Commissioners were sent by the king to investigate the case, and the results of their session were, that eightyfive persons, fifteen of whom were children, were burnt at the stake; twenty were whipped with lashes upon their hands at the church door for three sabbaths, and thirtysix were compelled to run the gauntlet, and be whipped once a week for a year.

About three hundred children testified that they had been carried to Blockula, which was the name of the imaginary place of the diabolical rendezvous.

At the trial of Susanna Martin in Salem, it was proved that one John Kembel had agreed to purchase a puppy from the prisoner, but had afterwards fallen back from his bargain, and procured a puppy from some other person, and that Martin was heard to say, 'If I live, I will give him puppies enough.' These circumstances seem to me to render it probable that the following piece of evidence given by Kembel, and to which the court attached great weight, was the result of a nightmare occasioned by his apprehension and dread of the fulfilment of the old woman's threat.

'Within a few days after this, Kembel coming out of the woods, there arose a little black cloud in the northwest, and Kembel immediately felt a force upon him, which made him not able to avoid running upon the stumps of trees that were before him, although he had a broad plain cartway before



him ; but though he had his axe on his shoulder to endanger him in his falls, he could not forbear going out of his way to tumble over them. When he came below the meeting-house, there appeared to him a little thing like a puppy of a darkish color, and it shot backwards and forwards between his legs. He had the courage to use all possible endeavors to cut it with his axe, but he could not hit it ; the puppy gave a jump from him, and went, as to him it seemed, into the ground. Going a little further, there appeared unto him a black puppy, somewhat bigger than the first, but as black as a coal. Its motions were quicker than those of his axe. It flew at his body and at his throat, so over his shoulders one way, and then over his shoulders another way. His heart now began to fail him, and he thought the dog would have tore his throat out ; but he recovered himself and called upon God in his distress, and naming the name of Jesus Christ, it vanished away at once.'

There is, indeed, at the present day, great need of a thorough and philosophical discus-

sion of the principles of evidence. The liability all men are under to confound the fictions of their imaginations with the realities of actual observation is not understood with sufficient clearness by the community, and so long as it is not understood and regarded, serious mistakes and inconveniences will be apt to occur in seasons of general excitement. We are still disposed to attribute more importance than we ought to strong convictions, without stopping to inquire whether they may not be in reality delusions, of the understanding. The cause of truth demands a more thorough examination of this whole subject. The visions that appeared before the mind of the celebrated Col. Gardiner, are still regarded by the generality of pious people as evidence of miraculous interposition ; while just so far as they are evidence to that point, so far is the authority of Christianity overthrown, for it is a fact that Lord Herbert of Cherbury believed with equal sincerity and confidence, that he had been vouchsafed a similar vision sanctioning his labors, when about to publish what

has been pronounced one of the most powerful attacks ever made upon our religion. It is dangerous to advance arguments in favor of any cause which may be founded upon nothing better than the reveries of an ardent imagination !

The last circumstance I shall consider as necessary to the full understanding of the position of our ancestors, with reference to the superstitious delusions that have now occupied our attention, is the state of biblical criticism at that period. This department of knowledge was then in its infancy.

The authority of scripture as it appeared on the face of the standard version, seemed to require them to pursue the course they adopted ; and those enlarged and just principles of interpretation, which we are taught by the learned of all denominations at the present day to apply to the sacred writings, had not then been brought into the view of the people or received by the clergy.

It was gravely argued, for instance, that there was nothing improbable in the idea that witches had the power, in virtue of their

compact with the devil, of riding aloft through the air, because it is recorded in the history of our Lord's temptation, that Satan transported him in a similar manner to the pinnacle of the temple, and to the summit of an exceedingly high mountain. And Cotton Mather declares that, to his apprehension, the disclosures of the wonderful operations of the devil upon and through his subjects, that were made in the course of the witchcraft prosecutions, had shed a marvellous light upon the scriptures! What a perversion of the sacred writings, to employ them for the purpose of sanctioning the extravagant and delirious reveries of the human imagination! What a miserable delusion, to suppose that the word of God could receive illumination from the most absurd and horrible superstitions, that ever brooded in darkness over the mind of man!

I would not, my friends, have led you through the wide field we have now traversed together, had I not believed that we might gather much useful instruction from the scenes and objects that have been pre-

sented to our contemplation. Let us pause before we take leave of the subject, and collect and apply that instruction.

In the terrible consequences that resulted from the mischievous, and perhaps, at the outset, merely sportive, proceedings of the children in Mr Parris' family, we have a striking illustration of the principle, that no one can foretell, with respect either to himself or others, the extent of the suffering and injury that may be occasioned by the least departure from truth and honesty. In the horrible succession of crimes through which those young persons were led to pass, in the depth of wickedness and depravity into which they were thrown, we discern the fate which they are in danger of bringing upon themselves who enter upon the career of wickedness.

I am sure that no person can compare the view I have given of the condition of opinion and knowledge, not much more than a century ago, with their present condition, without being struck with a grateful and admiring conviction of the wonderful progress

that has been made. Who can refrain from exclaiming, if the modern impulses toward improvement have pushed forward society in science, philosophy and theology, to this great extent during one century, what limits can be assigned to its upward progress ! What magnificent prospects open upon the world ! What a glorious assurance is given to the benevolent and devout mind, that the predictions of scripture are approaching their fulfilment, and that the time will surely and rapidly hasten on, when baleful superstition and degrading error shall be banished from the soul of man, and the blessings of knowledge, truth, and pure religion be diffused through all the families of the earth !

No one can have an adequate knowledge of the human mind, who has not contemplated its developments in scenes like those related in these lectures. It may be said of the frame of our spiritual, even with more emphasis than of our corporeal nature, that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. It is the opinion of observers of the animal world, that man, when his features and limbs

are all in due proportion, health gliding through his veins, strength and symmetry clothing his whole form, intelligence beaming from his countenance, and immortality stamped on his brow, is indeed the noblest work of God. We all know, that, in the degradation and corruption to which he can descend, he is the most odious and loathsome object in the creation. So it is with our spiritual nature. The human mind when all its faculties are fully developed, and in proper proportions, reason seated on its throne, imagination shedding abroad its light, memory embracing the past, hope smiling upon the future, faith leaning on heaven, and the affections diffusing through all their gentle warmth, is worthy of its source, deserves its original title of 'image of God,' and is greater and better than the whole material universe. It is nobler than all the works of God, for it is an emanation, a part of God himself, 'a ray from the fountain of light.' But where, I ask, can you find a more deplorable and miserable object than the mind in ruins, tossed by its own rebellious

principles, and distorted by the monstrously unequal development of its faculties? You will look in vain upon the earthquake, the volcano, or the hurricane, for those elements of the awful and terrible, that are manifested in a community of men whose passions have trampled upon their principles, whose imaginations have overthrown the government of reason, and who are swept along by the torrent until all order and security are swallowed up and lost. Such a spectacle we have now been witnessing. We have seen the whole population of this place and vicinity yielding to the sway of their credulous fancies, allowing their passions to be worked up to a tremendous pitch of excitement, and rushing into excesses of folly and violence, that have left a dark stain upon their memory, and will awaken a sense of shame, pity, and amazement in the minds of their latest posterity. The principal causes that led to their delusion, and to the proceedings connected with it, were, a proneness to superstition, owing in a great degree to an ignorance of natural science, too great a dependence upon the imagination,



From the first of these, we are happily free. The discovery of the principles and laws of the physical universe, has advanced far enough already to dispel the illusions and superstitions that in previous ages occupied all minds. The whole community is now enabled to inspect and comprehend the secret processes of nature. Here, in our halls of science, in our associations for the diffusion of knowledge, in our Lyceums, philosophy welcomes the learned and the unlearned, the old and the young, the rich and the poor, to the sight of her mysteries ; and stands ready to unfold and reveal to them the principles that regulate the movements and determine the forces of the outward universe, from the systems that roll above us to the most hidden elements of the earth beneath our feet.

We shall not have occasion to regret that we have contemplated the errors and sufferings which ignorance of philosophy and science brought upon our fathers, if we are thus led to appreciate more gratefully, and improve more faithfully our own opportu-

nities to get knowledge and wisdom. As we advance into the interior of nature's works, and are led in succession from one revelation of beauty and grandeur to another, while the fearful images that darkened and distressed the faith of our fathers are thus dissolving and vanishing before us, and the presence and providence of the infinitely Good are found to fill all scenes and cause all effects, may our hearts be led to raise to Him a loftier adoration and a holier homage ! If, while we enjoy a fuller revelation of his magnificent operations and designs than our fathers did, the sentiment of piety which glowed in their hearts, like a coal from the altar of God, has been permitted to grow dim in ours, no reproach their errors and faults can possibly authorize will equal that which will justly fall upon us.

Another cause of their delusion was too great a dependence upon the imagination. We shall find no lesson more clearly taught by history, by experience, or by observation than this, that man is never safe while either his fancy or his feeling is the guiding

principle of his nature. There is a strong and constant attraction between his imagination and his passions, and if either is permitted to exercise unlimited sway, the other will most certainly be drawn into co-operation with it, and when they are allowed to act without restraint upon each other and with each other, they lead to the derangement and convulsion of his whole system. They constitute the combustible elements of our being ; one serves as the spark to explode the other. Reason, enlightened by revelation and guided by conscience, is the great conservative principle ; while that exercises the sovereign power over the fancy and the passions, we are safe ; if it is dethroned, no limit can be assigned to the ruin that may follow. In the scenes we have now been called to witness, we have perceived to what lengths of folly, cruelty, and crime even good men have been carried, who relinquished the aid, rejected the counsels, and abandoned the guidance of their reason.

The last cause that was mentioned of the

conduct of our fathers was the power of sympathy. Every wise man and good citizen ought to be aware of the existence and operation of this power. There seems, indeed, to be a constitutional, original sympathy in our nature. When men act in a crowd, their heart-strings are prone to vibrate in unison. Whatever chord of passion is struck in one breast, the same will ring forth its wild note through the whole mass. This principle shows itself particularly in seasons of excitement, and its power rises in proportion to the ardor and zeal of those upon whom it acts. It is for every man who desires to be preserved from the excesses of popular feeling, and to prevent the community from plunging into such a scene as that exhibited here in 1692, to keep his own judgment and emotions as free as possible from a power which thus seizes all that it can reach, draws them into its current, and sweeps them round and round like the Maelstrom, until they are overwhelmed and buried in its devouring vortex.

There is no duty more plain, there is none more important, than a free and fearless expression of opinion on all subjects. No wise or philosophic person would think of complaining of the diversities of sentiment it is calculated to develope. Such diversities are the vital principle of free communities, and where a proper spirit of civilization and religion prevails they create no inconvenience. It is probable that there were many persons here in 1692, who doubted the propriety of the proceedings at their commencement, but who were afterwards prevailed upon to fall into the current and swell the tide. Who can tell but that if they had all discharged their duty to their country, and their consciences, by freely and boldly uttering their disapprobation and declaring their dissent, who can tell but that the whole tragedy might have been prevented? and if it might, the blood of the innocent may be said, in one sense, to be upon their heads.

The leading features and most striking aspects of the witchcraft delusion have been repeated in places, where witches and the in-

terference of supernatural beings are never thought of; whenever a community gives way to its passions and spurns the admonitions and casts off the restraints of reason, there is a delusion that can hardly be described in any other phrase. We cannot glance our eye over the face of our country, without beholding such scenes; and so long as they are exhibited, so long as we permit ourselves to invest objects of little or no real importance with such an inordinate imaginary interest, that we are ready to go to every extremity rather than relinquish them; so long as we yield to the impulse of passion, and plunge into excitement, and take counsel of our feelings rather than our judgment, we are following in the footsteps of our fanatical ancestors. It would be wiser to direct our ridicule and reproaches to the delusions of our own times, rather than to those of a previous age, and it becomes us to treat with charity and mercy the failings of our predecessors, at least until we have ceased to imitate and repeat them.

If the citizens of this place are instructed

by the example of their fathers to imitate their virtues, while they avoid their errors, and if by meditating upon the tremendous tragedy that has now been related, they are led to avoid the evils that result from the unrestrained dominion of the passions and imagination, to an independent exercise of their reason and judgment on all occasions and to a careful self-control; if by contemplating the superstitions of their fathers, they are rendered more grateful in the possession of their own privileges for the acquisition of knowledge and science, and more zealous in their improvement, the lesson which providence caused to be inscribed on that page of their history which has now been read to them, will not have been given in vain.

I know not in what better terms the discussion of this subject can be brought to a termination, than in those which express the conclusions, to which the mind of one of our own most distinguished citizens was brought, after having examined the whole transaction with the eye of a lawyer and the spirit of a judge. The following extract is from the

Centennial Discourse pronounced in Salem on the 18th of September, 1828, by the Hon. Joseph Story, associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States.

‘We may lament then,’ says he, ‘the errors of the times, which led to these prosecutions. But surely our ancestors had no special reasons for shame in a belief, which had the universal sanction of their own and all former ages, which counted in its train, philosophers as well as enthusiasts, which was graced by the learning of prelates, as well as by the countenance of kings, which the law supported by its mandates, and the purest judges felt no compunctions in enforcing. Let Witch-Hill remain forever memorable by this sad catastrophe, not to perpetuate our dishonor, but as an affecting, enduring proof of human infirmity, a proof, that perfect justice belongs to one judgment seat only — that which is linked to the throne of God.’





